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Literary Portraits of the Pharisees in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew

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LITERARY PORTRAITS OF THE PHARISEES IN THE
GOSPELS OF MARK AND MATTHEW

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Department of Philosophy and Religion

Western Kentucky University

Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Michael R. Cosby

April 1980

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LITERARY PORTRAITS OF THE PHARISEES IN THE
GOSPELS OF MARK AND MATTHEW

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LITERARY PORTRAITS OF THE PHARISEES IN THE GOSPELS OF MARK AND MATTHEW

Michael R. Cosby

April 1980

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Due to the often inadequate methodology employed by scholars studying the pre-A.D. 70 Pharisees, new approaches are needed for analyzing the primary sources. Careful attention must be given to the literary genres of the four ancient sources of information on the Pharisees: the Psalms of Solomon, the New Testament, the writings of Josephus, and the rabbinic literature. As an example of such sensitivity to the ancient authors' purposes in writing and to the literary genres they employed in conveying their information, this study uses the Gospels of Mark and Matthew as test cases.

Careful analysis of authorial purpose, as revealed in the literary structuring and redactional modification of Gospel material, led to the following conclusions. First, the authors of Mark and Matthew display no interest in presenting a balanced picture of the Pharisees. Their major concern is to present the good news about Jesus Christ not to give a well-rounded view of those with whom he came into conflict. Information recorded on the Pharisees is limited almost exclusively to situations of conflict with Jesus, and the resulting picture is limited to negative aspects. Second, the different literary structures and authorial purposes of Mark and Matthew reveal both unity and diversity in their respective portraits of the Pharisees. Mark's emphasis on rapid movement toward the Passion Narrative finds one of its major sources of propulsion in the conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees, caused by his rejection

of their oral tradition. On the other hand, Matthew's major theme of Jesus as the authoritative interpreter of the Law causes the conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees to focus on who properly interprets, teaches, and obeys Scripture. Nevertheless, in spite of the diversity of structure and purpose, the Pharisaic portraits in Mark and Matthew are consistent. Both Gospels present the Pharisees as hypocrites who concentrate on the observance of minute details of religious ritual but who neglect the larger and more important issues of living for God.

CHAPTER I

THE PHARISEES IN MODERN STUDIES

For some time scholars have appreciated the complexity of understanding the historical nature of the Pharisees. Knowledge of the characteristics of this important Jewish party prior to A.D. 70 is limited to the witness of four ancient sources, each representing a different literary genre. The complexity of analyzing each primary source's unique contribution to the development of a historical picture of the Pharisaic party is clearly represented in the diverse conclusions reached by specialists in the Intertestamental and New Testament periods. Interpretation of the sources is of critical importance.

The four ancient sources of information on the Pharisees include the New Testament, the works of Josephus, the Tannaitic literature, and the Psalms of Solomon. In the New Testament the Pharisees are often pictured as Jesus' opponents and their portrayal is usually negative, but other aspects are also represented. Not only was Jesus entertained in the homes of Pharisees (e.g., Lk. 7:36 ff.); but there are also substantial parallels between Jesus' teaching and Pharisaic beliefs;¹ and much New Testament doctrine owes its formulation to rabbinic methods of biblical interpretation.²

¹E.g., the resurrection of the body (Jos. War 2:162-63; Ant. 18:11-17), belief in a Davidic Messiah (Psalms of Solomon 17:23-51; Mt. 22:42), etc.

²For an excellent treatment of this subject see R. N. Longenecker, Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975).

The Jewish historian Josephus, during the later years of his life, claimed to be himself a Pharisee (Life 9-12).³ Although one might suspect that Josephus' comments about the Pharisees therefore would be of a strictly positive nature, quite unlike the largely critical nature of many New Testament statements, this in fact is not the case. In his self-conscious attempt at recording chronologically the historical developments among the Jewish people, Josephus recounts both flattering and degrading descriptions.⁴

Extremely different from the New Testament's proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and Josephus' Jewish history, the Tannaitic literature represents a diverse collection of rabbinic sayings, totally lacking in chronological arrangement. This vast body of rabbinic law and lore contains sayings attributed to Pharisaic leaders living before A.D. 70, but the late date of their reduction to written form and their anonymous authorship present formidable problems for the historian.⁵

Still other exegetical difficulties arise with the interpretation of the Psalms of Solomon.⁶ Their anonymity makes positive ascription

³Some scholars believe that Josephus claimed to be a Pharisee only as a politically-oriented attempt to favorably dispose the Roman authorities toward allowing the Pharisees limited rule in Palestine late in the first century A.D. (e.g., J. Neusner, From Politics to Piety: The Emergence of Pharisaic Judaism (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973), pp. 54 ff.

⁴Ant. 13:171-73, 288-98, 380-83, 399-418; 14:167-76; 15:1-4, 370; 17:41-44; 18:3 ff., 11-17, 23-25; War 1:107-14, 571; 2:162-63, 166; 411-16; Life 122 ff.; 190-98.

⁵For a detailed analysis of this problem consult J. Neusner, The Rabbinic Traditions About the Pharisees Before 70, vols. I-III (Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1971).

⁶For complete translations of the Psalms of Solomon see G. B. Gray, "The Psalms of Solomon," in The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English, Vol. II (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1913), pp. 625-52.

to Pharisaic authorship impossible, although the majority of scholars believe they were written by Pharisees c. 40 B.C.⁷ If these hymnic expressions of first-century B.C. Jewish piety are in fact Pharisaic, they constitute the only known Pharisaic documents written before A.D. 70 and are therefore of great historical importance.

It is imperative in a comparative study of ancient sources to be sensitive to the issue of methodology. A major assumption undergirding this thesis is that each ancient document which speaks of the Pharisees must be examined for its distinctive witness. The point of view of the writer of the tradition must be appreciated. His audience, his authorial intention, his access to primary source information, his biases must all be taken into consideration. It is to this task, imposed by the very nature of the sources, that this thesis is devoted, with specific reference to the Gospels of Mark and Matthew.

Modern Interpretations of the Pharisees

Studies devoted to analyzing the origin, development, and beliefs of the Pharisees are divergent in their approach to the primary sources. Such divergence in methodology sometimes leads to radically differing interpretations of the nature of Pharisaism. In order to illustrate this, three of the leading works on the Pharisees representative of

⁷Since H. Ryle and M. James published their commentary Psalms of the Pharisees, Commonly Called the Psalms of Solomon (Cambridge: University Press, 1891), most have attributed Pharisaic authorship to the PssSol. Recently, however, a few scholars have claimed that the PssSol show more affinities to the Essenes than to the Pharisees. E.g., R. Wright, "The Psalms of Solomon, the Pharisees, and the Essenes," Septuagint and Cognate Studies 2, ed. R. Kraft (Missoula, MT: Scholar's Press, 1972), pp. 136-54. However, M. Black, "Pharisees," in Interpreters' Dictionary of the Bible, vol. III, ed. G. A. Buttrick (Nashville: Abindgon Press, 1962), pp. 774-81, argues that the PssSol are without doubt Pharisaic.

R. Meyer and H. F. Weiss

According to Meyer the Tannaitic literature suggests that the term "Pharisee" originated as a derogatory name used by opponents of the party. Φαρισαῖος is the Greek transliteration of the Aramaic פ'ר'ש'י, which means "separated." (פ'ר'ש'י is the Hebrew equivalent to the Aramaic term.)⁹ In the Tannaitic literature "separated" has both positive and negative connotations and is not a term enjoying frequent use by the Pharisaic rabbis to describe themselves.¹⁰

⁸R. Meyer and H. F. Weiss, "Φαρισαῖος," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol IX, ed. G. Friedrich, trans. G. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), pp. 11-48.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 13. E.g., b Pes., 70 b, וְיִנָּחֵץ means "dissident," while the same root is used positively in other contexts to mean separation from cultic defilement or restraint (e.g., T. Sota, 15, 11).

Although the origin of the Pharisees is obscure, the evidence from Josephus, the rabbinic literature, and some Qumran fragments points to the crisis of the second century B.C. as the time of their origin.¹¹ The Chasidim, or faithful, mentioned in I Macc. 2:42; 7:13; II Macc. 14:6, were a distinct party opposed to Hellenization of Judaism long before the Hasmoneans began their revolt. They were not characterized by their opposition to Antiochus Epiphanes but by their loyalty to the Law and their opposition to the Hellenizing rulers in Jerusalem. Remaining independent from the Hasmoneans, the Chasidim later withdrew their support from the revolt when a legitimate Aaronite high priest, Alkimus, was appointed (I Macc. 7:1-22). Since these concerns coincide with those of the Pharisaic party (cf. Ant. 13:288-96; b Qid., 66a), it is probably best to assume that the Pharisees arose from the Chasidim mentioned in I Macc. 7. They were most likely a minority group composed of some priests who believed that the true Israel could be established if the purity laws practiced by priests in the Temple should be actualized by all Jews in everyday life. As the high priest was separated from his family for seven days prior to the Day of Atonement as a means of sanctification (b Yoma, 8b; cf. b Yoma, 9b Bar.), so the Parush (separated one) by isolation sought to transfer into everyday life the purity required of the regular priests during their period of temple ministry. A number of non-priestly Chasidim openly received this idea, and very soon it was championed by lay leadership. Therefore the priests who were associated with the Chasidim did not enjoy special privileges as did the priests among the Essenes at Qumran.¹²

¹¹Ibid., p. 13. Cf. Jos. Ant. 13:288-296; b Qid., 66a.

¹²Ibid., pp. 15-16. As evidence Meyer cites Ab., 1, 2; 1, 4; 2, 7. He cites no Qumran texts.

As time progressed the Pharisees began to organize, and by the time of Alexander Jannaeus (103-76 B.C.) they were a formidable party (Jos. Ant. 13:372-6). Certain hierarchies within the party are evidenced by the statement that some tithed and maintained ritual purity while others only tithed (M. Demai 6, 6). Before a man could become a Pharisee he had to go through a testing period during which he must prove his understanding of how one maintains Levitical cleanness (M. Makshirin 6, 4; T. Demai, 2, 12). Other rabbinic literature forbids Pharisaic members from eating or preparing food with any 'am ha - areṣ (a Jew who rejected Pharisaic laws) or eating without first ritually washing their hands.¹³

Compared to the total population of Israel, the Pharisees were a minority group (Jos. Ant. 17:42). Most of the main leadership positions were occupied by the highly educated scribes. Under their leadership Pharisaism adopted beliefs which were originally alien to the thinking of Israel, making the Pharisees very distinct from the Sadducees who maintained conservative beliefs. In order to justify these new beliefs the scribes had to carefully harmonize them with Scripture. Their high level of education enabled them to accomplish this necessary biblical exposition, thus providing the basis for application of the Torah to everyday life.¹⁴

The Pharisaic party was open to all Jews, and no distinction was made between those in the temple area of Jerusalem and those in the diaspora.¹⁵ In the diaspora Pharisees were not politically-minded, but

¹³Ibid., p. 18. Meyer cites T. Demai, 2, 2; 2, 11.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 19-23. Few primary sources are available to Meyer for this material on scribes. Primarily he resorts to such texts as Sirach 38:24-39:11; Ezra 7:12, 21; I Macc. 7:12.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 23. This is a summary statement Meyer bases on the evidence of preceeding sections.

in Jerusalem they became an imposing political party. Concerned with establishing a legitimate Aaronite high priest, they led a civil war which lasted for six years (93-88 B.C.).¹⁶ They were defeated by Alexander Jannaeus and forced to flee into exile, but after his death they were given great power by Alexander's wife Salome. According to Josephus and the rabbinic traditions the Pharisees greatly enjoyed the reign of Salome (S. Lev. 14, 1 on 26:4; Lv. r. 35, 10 on 26:4; b Ber. 48a). They controlled domestic matters while the queen controlled foreign policy (Jos. Bell. 1, 112). It was under Salome's reign that they gained positions in the Sanhedrin, where afterward, even though a minority, they remained influential.¹⁷

After Salome's death, during the reign of Aristobulus II, the Pharisees lost their political power, but in the ensuing dynastic struggles they nevertheless sought to oppose the Hasmoneans. When Pompey arrived in 64 B.C. they sent an embassy to him denouncing the Hasmonean kings (Jos. Ant. 14:41). This rejection, reflecting new position, involved "a surrender of their previous insistence on a legitimate priest-prince in Jerusalem and its replacement with a complete rejection of the hierocracy."¹⁸ The resulting policy lacked an emphasis on political independence and provincial autonomy as can be seen in 37 B.C. when the Pharisees Pollion and Shema 'ya advised the people of Jerusalem to surrender to Herod I (Jos. Ant. 15:3, 6). Herod adopted a more universalistic policy than did the nationalistic Hasmoneans, and his rule somewhat

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 23-24. Jos. Bell. 1, 86-106; Ant. 13:324-44, 352-64, 372-83; 4QpNa 1:2 on 2:12; b Qid. 66a; PssSol 17:15-19.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 23-25.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 25.

avored the Pharisees; for, unlike the Sadducees, the Pharisees rejected the notion of the prince-priesthood and were unconcerned over the political position taken by the high-priest. Since they never championed a resistance against him, Herod did not pursue a policy of hostility toward the Pharisees.¹⁹

Following Herod's death conditions were not favorable for the Pharisees "for with the banishment of Archelaus the older Sadducean opponents, who had been brutally suppressed under Herod, regained the upper hand" and it is unthinkable that they would continue Herod's positive neutrality toward the Pharisees.²⁰ It is also noteworthy that during this time there were many trends in Pharisaism, such as the differences between Hillel and Shammai. Internal disruption continued until it finally erupted into the formation of the Zealot party (Jos. Ant. 18:4 ff.). Although Pharisees in general tolerated the government as long as it did not oppose their religious practices, the Zealots radically departed from this stance. Mainline Pharisaism had largely given up the belief in a universal political kingdom governed by a prince-priest, but some of those within the Pharisaic party would not tolerate being ruled by foreign kings, and these men formed the Zealot party.²¹

From the beginnings of the Pharisaic movement in the second century B.C. when the Pharisees began to apply ritual purity laws to everyday life and the highly educated scribes began to provide the biblical exposition which made this transition possible, the decisions of

¹⁹Ibid, pp. 25-26.

²⁰Ibid., p. 26.

²¹Ibid., p. 27.

these scribes were preserved in oral form. It is a distinctive aspect of Pharisaism that the decisions of the scribes on various issues began to occupy a place of equal standing with the Scriptures. This oral law formed a "fence" around the Torah and became the final authority in matters of religious law. Resenting this innovation, the Essenes believed the Pharisaic oral tradition destroyed the Law (CD viii. 18, 29), and their writings reveal considerable hostility toward the Pharisees.²²

In the years preceeding A.D. 70, the Pharisees were a minority group in the Sanhedrin; and the triumph of Pharisaism came only after the destruction of the temple and the Jerusalem hierocracy in A.D. 70; for at this time Sadduceeism came to an end. Since Pharisaism was not primarily based on religious and political autonomy but on community life in the synagogue, it could thrive even after the disaster of A.D. 70. Therefore once the rabbis won the confidence and favor of the Roman government, they began to rebuild an orderly lifestyle among the Jews. A small group of Hillelite Pharisees gathered around Jochanan ben Zakkai, and these rabbis began to establish a monolithic Judaism destined to thrive for centuries.²³

Meyer's approach to the history of the Pharisees involves an attempt to weave together information from the ancient sources. He gives considerable credibility to the sources and provides no discussion of possible difficulties involved in utilizing their information. No mention is made of authorial purpose, bias, etc., in the primary source material. Although Meyer is probably well aware of such considerations,

²²Ibid., pp. 28-30. CD iv. 19-21; i. 18-ii. 1; 1QH ii. 15, 32, 34; iv. 10.

²³Ibid., pp. 31-35.

he does not explicitly employ them in the development of his article. His approach primarily involves using the ancient sources (I-II Maccabees and Josephus) to construct a historical sequence of Pharisaic development, into which he weaves relevant information from rabbinic material and occasionally something from the Dead Sea Scrolls. Although he once cites PssSol 17:15-19 as a historical reference to the Pharisaic leadership of a civil war,²⁴ Meyer nowhere uses the Psalms of Solomon in his presentation of Pharisaic beliefs and practices.

The manner in which Meyer organizes his material is very different from the approach of Weiss, his co-author of the article. One of Weiss' major concerns is to point out the authorial biases of the New Testament writers. Seeking to prove that the New Testament authors were bitter enemies of the Pharisees, he states that the New Testament documents reveal more about the biases of their authors than they do about the historical Pharisees. "There is perhaps a tendency in the Synoptic Gospels to present the Pharisees as typical representatives of a Judaism hostile to Christianity. . . Pharisees are presented as a collective entity with no individual features."²⁵ This deep concern with authorial bias and intention, quite unlike the approach of Meyer to the other ancient sources, forms the basis for his investigation of the Gospels.

Although Mark and Luke are seen to contain much in the way of anti-Pharisaic polemic, Matthew's decidedly anti-Pharisaic bias can be shown in the way he alters Markan or Q material to deliberately create an overly-negative view of the Pharisees. Furthermore, Matthew's

²⁴Ibid., p. 24.

²⁵Ibid., p. 36.

failure to differentiate between Pharisees and other Jewish groups reveals that he wrote during a time when Pharisees were the only Jewish opponents of the church (e.g., Mt. 16:1, 6, 11, 12).²⁶

John's picture of the Pharisees generally matches that of the Synoptics; however, John typically uses the comprehensive term "the Jews," not "the Pharisees." Reflecting a later date of composition, the Gospel not only links the Pharisees with the chief priests, giving them the same power, but also makes no distinction between scribes and Pharisees (Jn. 7:32, 45; 11:47, 57; 18:3).²⁷

Unlike the Gospels, Paul's epistles and Acts contain no active anti-Pharisaic polemic. Sadducees, not Pharisees, are Jesus' true opponents in Acts. Pharisees are tolerant of Christians (Acts 5:34 ff.) and even come to Paul's defense in Acts 23:6 (cf. Acts 15:5; 21:20 where Pharisees become Christians). Paul's Pharisaic background is the occasion for pride, not dishonor (Phil. 3:5 f.; Gal. 1:13 f.).²⁸

Weiss expends little effort at defining Pharisaism from the New Testament documents. His focus is on the conflict between the Pharisees and the early church. Strikingly different from Meyer's optimistic use of the primary sources, Weiss is extremely cautious concerning the historical credibility of the present form of the Gospel material on the Pharisees. He strives to reveal the anti-Pharisaic bias of the Gospels, not to determine the historic witness of the New Testament to specific characteristics of the Pharisaic party. Characteristics of the Pharisees

²⁶Ibid., p. 37.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 43-45.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 45-46.

are normally imported by Weiss from the other ancient sources in order to evaluate specific New Testament material.

Ellis Rivkin

According to Rivkin, only Josephus, the New Testament, and the Tannaitic literature qualify as sources to define objectively the characteristics of the historical Pharisees. Only these sources use the term "Pharisee" and "derive from a time when the Pharisees flourished."²⁹ Therefore they are the only verifiable witnesses to Pharisaism.

Josephus' view of the Pharisees enjoys three vantage points: (1) he was a Pharisee himself; (2) he observed the Pharisees before, during, and after the revolt against Rome; and (3) he was a self-conscious historian who employed sources that told of the Pharisees before his time. As a historian, Josephus only recorded those events in which the Pharisees participated that he considered to be of history-making significance. Otherwise he did not mention them.³⁰

Josephus' first mention of the Pharisees reveals them to be a fully functioning group during the time of Jonathan (Ant. 13:171-3), and he makes no further mention of them until their split with Hyrcanus (Ant. 13:288-98). The fact that they could lead a rebellion against Hyrcanus proves that they had a large and loyal following among the people. Relying solely on ancient sources for his information, Josephus included these accounts not because of a special interest in the Pharisees but because of their historical importance.³¹

²⁹E. Rivkin, A Hidden Revolution: The Pharisees' Search for the Kingdom Within (Nashville: Abingdon, 1978), p. 31.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 32-33.

³¹Ibid., pp. 34-37.

Hyrchanus rejected his personal Pharisaic lifestyle after a trouble-making Pharisee questioned his right to be high-priest; and, due to the well-timed slander of a certain Sadducee, Hyrchanus made it illegal to follow the Pharisaic laws (Ant. 13:288-98). The fact that the general populace obeyed Pharisaic laws provides evidence that the Pharisees comprised a scholar class with the authority to establish laws for the people. Josephus' additional statement that the Pharisees and Sadducees differed over the acceptance of the Pharisaic unwritten law shows that the two parties were "protagonists of two conflicting systems of law."³² Far from being passive academics, the Pharisees were aggressive and forceful in their attempts to propagate their unwritten law.

Later, when Salome restored the Pharisaic laws after the death of Alexander, Josephus reports that the Pharisees took advantage of their regained power to murder influential men who had backed Alexander (Ant. 13:408-11). This unfavorable account of their activities provides evidence that Josephus was not writing Pharisaic propaganda. His historically reliable account shows that the Pharisees had two aims: (1) to restore their unwritten law, and (2) to crush their opposition. They were strong enough to strike terror into the aristocracy, and they championed a legal system meant to operate throughout the nation (War 1:107-14; Ant. 13:399 ff.).³³

Rivkin sees a further indication that the Pharisees were a scholar class in Josephus' statement that the Pharisees Pollion and Samaïas had disciples. These men were not only scholars with obedient pupils, but were powerful men of state as well. The powerful Herod,

³²Ibid., p. 41.

³³Ibid., pp. 45-46.

feeling the need for their support, actually bent before their demands (Ant. 14:168-83, 175-76; 15:3-4, 370).³⁴

Being scholars and teachers, the Pharisees commanded great respect from the people. Josephus claims that the Pharisees were not only the most accurate interpreters of the laws (War 2:162-63) but also were influential that the populace forced the Sadducees to offer prayers and sacrifices in the temple according to Pharisaic proscription (Ant. 18:12-17). These Pharisaic interpretations of the laws, given absolute respect and obedience by the Pharisees, existed as oral traditions passed down from great Pharisaic leaders of the past (Ant. 18:12-17).³⁵

Josephus sees no contradiction between political activism and being a Pharisee. These men constituted a scholar class which militantly guarded its unwritten law and was roused to hostility when it was threatened. Differing radically from the Pentateuch, their oral law was geared to affect the very fiber of contemporary society, a society deeply influenced by the Pharisees. Pharisees preferred to live in peace as long as the ruling country did not violate their religious laws (Ant. 18:2b-10, 23-25). They were initially opposed to the revolt against Rome and tried to stop it, but once it was under way they joined the rebellion and provided some of the main leadership (War 2:411-14; 4:158-61; Life 190-98).³⁶

According to Rivkin, the New Testament authors typically view the Pharisees as objects of hostility. Nevertheless, the portrait given of the Pharisees in the New Testament reveals the same basic characteristics as Josephus' account. This may be seen in two Pauline documents: Galatians and Philippians. Alluding to his former life as a Pharisee, Paul

³⁴Ibid., pp. 50-53.

³⁵Ibid., pp. 53-57.

³⁶Ibid., pp. 57-64.

makes two statements about this Jewish party: (1) they are committed to the unwritten law (tradition of the Fathers); and (2) righteousness under the Law is their dominant goal (Phil. 3:2-7; Gal. 1:13-14).³⁷

The witness of the Synoptic Gospels to the Pharisees is mediated through oral tradition and the individual Gospel writers. Consequently, the historical accuracy of their accounts cannot be determined precisely. Although each Gospel is hostile to the Pharisees, the strength of their hostility varies. Matthew has the most information about the Pharisees and is the most hostile; Mark has the least data and is the least hostile; and Luke is midway between Matthew and Mark.³⁸

At the outset it must be stressed that for the purposes of extracting data to define the Pharisees, the problem of dating the sources is relatively unimportant. An intensification of hatred for the Pharisees might well have grown out of experiences that followed the death of Jesus, and hence not attributable to Jesus himself. But this makes little difference, for we are concerned in this study with identifying the Pharisees, and not with determining the intensity of Jesus' hostility toward them or with the dating. So long as the Synoptics do not confront us with contradictory data, or with mutually exclusive images, we can bypass both the problem of the degree of hostility toward the Pharisees and of the dating of the sources.³⁹

Before one can determine the New Testament picture of the Pharisees, the relationship between the Pharisees and the scribes must be analyzed because scribes and Pharisees are often linked together in the Synoptics. In order to reconstruct this relationship it is best to begin by analyzing only those Synoptic passages which limit their designation to "Pharisees" and formulate a definition of "Pharisee" from these passages, as well as those in Acts. The material in these

³⁷Ibid., pp. 76-79.

³⁸Ibid., p. 79. Rivkin supplies evidence for his statement later in the chapter.

³⁹Ibid., p. 80.

passages reveals a variety of Pharisaic doctrinal beliefs, but primarily the picture which emerges is that of a group of authoritative teachers of the two-fold law (Torah and the Traditions of the Fathers) who are held in honor by the common people. They are considered examples of righteous teaching, if not always consistent living (Mt. 23:2-39; 5:17-20; Mk. 7:1-23; 10:2-12; 2:23-28; 3:1-6; 2:18-20; 12:13-17; 8:11-15; Mt. 22:23-40; Acts 22:30; 23:6-10).⁴⁰

The Gospel of John presents a different picture of the Pharisees than that of the Synoptics. In John the term "Pharisee" is a synonym for "Jew," and no distinction is made between Pharisees and Sadducees. John's Pharisees have power even greater than that of the chief priests (Jn. 1:24, 7:45-52; 8:12-20; 9:1-41; 11:45-53; 12:12-19, 42-43), controlling the synagogues and having the authority to excommunicate people. Although John does not link the Pharisees with tradition, law, hypocrisy, or the scribes, there is nothing in the Gospel to preclude such distinctions. Concerned with post A.D. 70 Judaism, inter-Jewish debates are irrelevant to the Gospel of John. Therefore no distinction is made between various Jewish groups such as Pharisees and Sadducees.⁴¹

After Rivkin completes his survey of the New Testament passages referring to the Pharisees, he returns to the question of the relationship between the scribes and the Pharisees. If the scribes can be shown to hold identical views with the Pharisees, never expressing contrary views nor acting differently, then it can be concluded that these two groups are one and the same. That this is in fact the case can be seen by first evaluating those passages in which scribes alone are mentioned

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 80-98.

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 98-104.

(Mk. 1:21-28; 2:5-11; 3:19b-30; 9:11-13; 12:35-37, 38-40; 8:31; 11:18, 27-33; 14:1-2, 43, 53; 15:1, 31-32). The definition of "scribe" constructed from these passages reveals a group of scholars of considerable prestige who not only had authority to pass judgment on Jesus' teaching but also formed a significant part of the Sanhedrin. Doctrinally they believed in the resurrection and were thus in one accord with the Pharisees against the Sadducees (Mk. 12:18-34). Significantly, Matthew sometimes changes Markan material referring to the scribes and makes them statements about Pharisees (e.g., Mk. 12:28 and Mt. 22:34; Mk. 12:35-40 and Mt. 22:41-46). When coupled with the fact that in Mark 7 Pharisees and scribes come to Jesus and speak to him with one voice, and are challenged by him as though they were one and the same, the indication is that "scribe" and "Pharisee" are synonyms. For Matthew the authoritative teachers are Pharisees, while for Mark they are scribes. Since there would not be two scholarly teaching classes who taught the same doctrine, both groups must be one and the same.⁴²

Rivkin next acknowledges that scholars typically use the Tannaitic literature to define "Pharisee," but cautions that this literature "lends itself to arbitrary and subjective manipulation."⁴³ Being a large

⁴²Ibid., pp. 105-113. Rivkin's argument at this point is so weak it demands a reply. First, he fails to account for Mk. 2:16 which speaks of the "scribes of the Pharisees." Mark makes these scribes a subset within the Pharisaic party, so of course there would be no difference in their doctrine. Second, if Matthew was written c. A.D. 80, as a great many scholars believe, the only Jewish religious group offering leadership at that time was the Pharisees. They were the uncontested leaders of Judaism. If Christians in Matthew's time associated Judaism with Pharisaism, the exchange of Pharisee for scribe makes perfectly good sense in light of Matthew's anti-Pharisaical bias. Rivkin appears overly anxious to establish the Pharisees as a scholar class, thus disallowing that some scribes were recognized leaders within the Pharisaic party.

⁴³Ibid., p. 125.

collection of lore and law spanning centuries, it has no systematic interest in history. Enormously important historical events such as the Hasmonean Revolt, the revolt against Rome in A.D. 66-70, the destruction of the temple, and the Bar Kochba Revolt are not even mentioned. This rabbinic material shows itself to be the product of a scholar class which narrowly focussed its interest on the two-fold law of Torah and oral tradition (Ab. 1:1).⁴⁴

Deriving a definition of "Pharisee" from the Tannaitic literature is extremely difficult. The term Perushim from which "Pharisee" is derived is used in a variety of ways with both positive and negative connotations, sometimes as a proper noun and sometimes as an common noun. Therefore some method is needed whereby one can determine when Perushim means Pharisee and when it does not.

Fortunately a number of passages in the Tannaitic literature are concerned with arguments between Pharisees and Sadducees. Since "Sadducee" (Zedukim) is only used as a proper noun, any passage juxtaposing Zedukim and Perushim can be used as a definitive text for defining "Pharisee," for in these passages Perushim will always be a proper noun referring to the Pharisees.⁴⁵ Careful examination of these texts reveals another very important detail, namely that Perushim is a synonym for Hakhamim (sages), and Soferim (scribes). It therefore becomes possible to utilize all the passages which juxtapose the Hakhamim and the Sadducees to further expand the information on the Pharisees.⁴⁶ These

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 125-29.

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 131-38. Rivkin employs Yad. 4:6; 7; Tosef. Yad. 2:20; Yad. 4:8; Yom. 19b; Tosef. Hag. 3:35; Nid. 33b; Tosef. Yom. 1:8.

⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 138-142. (Mak. 1:6; Tosef. Sanh. 6:6; Tosef. R. H. 1:15).

passages reveal the names of several famous Hakhamim, and therefore stories about these men can be added to the list of relevant material.⁴⁷

Still other pertinent information can be gathered from texts where the Sadducees are opposing an anonymous halakhah which is identical to a stated Pharisaic position in those texts where Perushim occurs with the anonymous halakhah, etc.⁴⁸ Rivkin continues to pile connection upon connection and continually expands the amount of relevant information until he feels justified in making these conclusions:

1. Pharisees are sages who formulate laws governing the haberim, nazarites, priests, and levites. They do not separate themselves from the 'am ha-ares by having a different law for themselves
2. Perushim can mean "ascetics" and "heretics" (non-Pharisees and anti-Pharisees)
3. Pharisees are a scholar class dedicated to the two-fold law. Being active leaders, they determine ritual dates and procedures, even for the non-Pharisaic high priest
4. The name "Pharisee" was used by the Pharisees only in controversies with the Sadducees. In all other texts they call themselves scribes or sages⁴⁹

Rivkin concludes that Josephus, the New Testament, and the Tannaitic literature all present a consistent picture of the Pharisees as being a powerful group of scholars devoted to the two-fold law and having tremendous influence over the common people. On the basis of

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 142-146 (Kid. 66a; B. B. 115b-16a).

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 147 ff. (M. Men. 10:3; Men. 65a; Tosef. Suk. 3:1; Tosef. Par. 3:8; etc.).

⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 176-178.

his examination of the primary sources and their picture of the Pharisees, Rivkin proceeds to reconstruct the origin and development of this group.

Although a date is not specified for the origin of the Pharisaic party in any of the ancient sources, a date can be established prior to which they did not exist by examining the book of Ben Sira (c. 180 B.C.). Ben Sira mentions virtually every institution in Judaism, yet nowhere does he speak of the Pharisees or the two-fold law. Therefore at that time "scribe" was not synonymous with "Pharisee." According to Ben Sira the scribes of his day taught proverbs and dealt in the pursuit of wisdom, but he makes no mention of them teaching the law. In the hierocratic society of Ben Sira's time the Aaronide priests taught the Pentateuchal Law, and the scribes were not given authority in this area (Sirach 45:1-2, 5b-7; 13-22, 23-24; 50:1-21; 38:24-31; 33-34; 39:1-8). As a scribe Ben Sira does not challenge Aaronide supremacy. He represents a belief that scribes rule over wisdom, not Torah.⁵⁰

After Sirach was written, during the time when Jason and Meneleus bought the position of high priest from Antiochus IV, people lost their faith in the theocratic leadership. Consequently a new system of authority emerged, one based not on the Pentateuch but on an oral tradition designed to meet contemporary needs. This new system of authority can be seen in the convening of the great synagogue, during which the position of high-priest and king was conferred upon Simon (I Macc. 14:25-44). This gathering had no Pentateuchal warrant and Simon, a non-Zadokite, had no biblical right to be high priest. Therefore the Zadokite priests would not have been responsible for such an action and it could be that

⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 184-202.

they labeled the scholar class who convened the assembly Perushim (separatists).⁵¹

Thus the Pharisaic party was born out of a revolution in an attempt to modernize the existing religious system. Adopting newer ways of thinking, the Pharisees were probably influenced by Hellenistic thinking even as they sought to establish a nation faithful to God. This may be seen in the following comparisons:

1. Pharisees are approximately equal to the philosopher-sages, philosopher-statesmen, and philosopher-law-givers
2. Their teacher-disciple relationship is similar to that of the philosopher-student relationship
3. The Pharisaic concept of unwritten laws is common in Greek and Roman philosophy
4. The Great Synagogue has parallels to the Roman senate
5. The concept of laws as individual items without narrative is characteristic of Greek and Roman systems
6. Pharisaic belief in the immortality of the soul echoes Greek literature
7. Proof-texting, a primary characteristic of Pharisaic exegesis, was common in the Greco-Roman world⁵²

In the remainder of his book Rivkin proceeds to explain his views on how Pharisaic beliefs developed and the influence they had on Christianity. Throughout his work he gives great credibility to the witness of the primary sources, asserting that their witness to the historical Pharisees is consistent, even though they were written for entirely

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 202-221.

⁵²Ibid., pp. 242-243.

different purposes and reflect differing viewpoints. Rivkin is aware of authorial bias, purpose, etc., and comments briefly on these issues; but he does not view them as weighty obstacles to be overcome. As long as contradictory information is not forthcoming, such considerations are ignored.

When approaching the New Testament, Rivkin points out the existence of differing attitudes toward the Pharisees but fails to account adequately for these differences in his interpretation of the relevant texts. Instead of grappling with the purpose of each author, he looks instead for the location of key words. For example, when he observes Mt. 22:34-35 using the term "Pharisee" while Mk. 12:28 employs "scribe," Rivkin feels justified in concluding that the terms are synonymous. He fails to consider that Matthew's purpose in writing may provide a very different conclusion to why he employs "Pharisee" rather than "scribe."

A similar term-based methodology is employed by Rivkin on the Tannaitic literature. He simply concerns himself with locating texts utilizing relevant terms, finding synonyms for these terms which in turn leads to the use of other texts, etc. Although he begins his search by pointing out that Perushim is used in a variety of ways and some sort of control must be established in order to objectively determine which texts employing Perushim actually refer to the Pharisees, he fails to raise the issue of why the texts were written and what bearing this might have on the information they contain.

Rivkin strives to reach his conclusions through an objective procedure, but it is difficult not to gain the impression that he is intent on proving that the Pharisees were a scholar class and that this concern, at least in part, inspires his approach. Where contrary evidence

exists, he sometimes ignores it completely (e.g., Mk. 2:16). In conclusion, Rivkin's methodology fails to give adequate consideration to the larger issues of context because of its somewhat simplistic basis on the mere presence or absence of key terms.

Jacob Neusner

Compared to Rivkin, Jacob Neusner employs a radically different approach to the ancient sources. He unflinchingly applies modern criticism to all the sources and is rather skeptical of their historical veracity. Neusner is quite critical of Rivkin's approach, speaking harshly against all works on the Pharisees which are based on "theories" not on "facts."⁵³ In a three-volume work, he carefully evaluates all the rabbinic traditions about the Pharisees before A.D. 70, subjecting them to critical tools and evaluating their historical validity.⁵⁴ He concludes that apart from the story of John Hyrcanus' banquet, during which he was told by a Pharisee that he should not function as high priest (b. Qid. 66a), the rabbinic material neither overlaps the information given by Josephus nor provides a similar description of the Pharisees.

The rabbinic literature only records information of concern within the Pharisaic party and never mentions the Essenes, Christians, Romans, etc. Contrary to Josephus, the rabbis "never imagined the Pharisees were the real administrators of state," nor do they mention fate, the imperishability of the soul, or other Pharisaic attributes emphasized by Josephus.⁵⁵ However, the stress of the Gospels on the Pharisees does

⁵³J. Neusner, Politics, op. cit., p. XIX.

⁵⁴J. Neusner, Rabbinic Traditions, op. cit.

⁵⁵Ibid., vol. III, p. 243.

coincide with the rabbinic literature ("cleanness laws, agricultural taboos, sabbath and festival observance, family laws"), fasting being the only aspect given "no significant part in the rabbinic tradition about the Pharisees."⁵⁶

After writing his three-volume work, Neusner published a shorter volume on the Pharisees in which he briefly analyzes Josephus' works, the New Testament, and the rabbinic literature.⁵⁷ The results of his analysis differ radically from Rivkin's.

After an initial statement on the importance of Hillel in the rabbinic traditions, Neusner directs his attention to the analysis of various Hillel pericopes. He divides each pericope into its component parts and seeks to determine how it arrived at its present structure through historical and form critical considerations. His study leads him to conclude that Hillel pericopes were modified and developed by Hillelite heirs in order to provide models of virtue and points of origin for many legal and literary phenomena. These pericopes are not historically plausible, for they consist of those issues deemed important by later generations which were subsequently ascribed to Hillel. Therefore they do not provide an adequate starting point for investigation of the Pharisees.⁵⁸

Josephus' works provide a more credible starting point for study of the Pharisees for two reasons: (1) he consciously attempts to write an account of things that actually happened; and (2) his work did not undergo revision by later scholars.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 247.

⁵⁷Neusner, Politics, op. cit.

⁵⁸Ibid., pp. 41-43.

In his first book, War, Josephus gives a consistent picture of the Pharisees. They were a political party which, at least under Salome, gained dominance and were prepared to use force to make people conform to their understanding of law (War 1:107-14).⁵⁹ In Antiquities, written twenty years after War, Josephus' portrait of the Pharisees had changed. By this time he was claiming to be a Pharisee himself (Life 9-12), a claim entirely absent before. This was probably due to his desire to present the Pharisees in a positive light to the Roman world, for the Pharisees were now the leaders of Judaism. Josephus' new attitude toward the Pharisees thus reflects a political move on his part to favorably dispose the Romans toward them. Evidence of this can be seen in his account of their actions under Salome Alexandra (Ant. 13:399-418). In War 1:107-14 the Pharisees take advantage of her, wreaking terrible vengeance on their enemies, etc., but in Antiquities even the dying Alexander recommends them to his wife, advising her to let them do with his body whatever they desire. Following her husband's directions, she gains the confidence of the Pharisees, who in turn use their power to sway the masses to support her government. Josephus' former description of terrible Pharisaic vengeance on their enemies is scaled down to represent only a mild persecution. It is therefore necessary to remove Josephus' political motivations from his later writings. When this is done his historical description of the Pharisees is that of a party of philosophical politicians who ceased their political life after the advent of Herod, thereafter becoming only a philosophical party.⁶⁰

⁵⁹Ibid., pp. 45-54. The Pharisees' emphasis on oral tradition provided an open attitude toward being influenced by the Hellenistic world (War 2:162-66).

⁶⁰Ibid., pp. 54-66.

According to Neusner the New Testament presents the Pharisees as a Jewish sect interested in religious, not political, matters. When one discounts the hostile polemic of the Gospels against the Pharisees, the resulting portrait of them is primarily that of a sect concerned with keeping ritual purity in the home, tithing, and maintaining dietary restrictions. Written between A.D. 50-90, the New Testament accounts reflect the hostility between the Pharisees and the early church more than the actual events during the time of Jesus.⁶¹ Five kinds of tradition about the Pharisees can be distinguished in the Gospels:

1. Those in which the Pharisees are part of the narrative background, portrayed as Jesus' enemies trying to trap him⁶²
2. Conflict stories with Pharisees criticizing Jesus⁶³
3. General condemnation of Pharisaic hypocrisy in which they offer no reply⁶⁴
4. Occasions where Pharisees and Christians are in agreement⁶⁵
5. Instances where Pharisees are condemned in specific terms⁶⁵

These stories focus on details of Pharisaic belief and practice: they do not eat with sinners; they fast; they observe the Sabbath in certain ways; and they maintain ritual purity in the home. This last category

⁶¹Ibid., pp. 67-68.

⁶²Ibid., pp. 68-69 (Mt. 21:45; Lk. 11:53-54; Mk. 10:2-10; 12:13-17; etc.).

⁶³Ibid., p. 70 (Jn. 9:13-17, 40; Mt. 9:11, 14, 34; Lk. 5:17-26).

⁶⁴Ibid., pp. 70-71 (Mt. 3:7; 5:20; 6:16; Mk. 8:15; Lk. 7:30; 12:1; 16:10-14; 18:9-14).

⁶⁵Ibid., pp. 71-72 (Lk. 13:31; Acts 5:34-39; 23:6-9; 26:5; etc.).

⁶⁶Ibid., pp. 73-78 (Mk. 2:15-23 and parr.; 7:1-13 and parr.; Mt. 12:1-14 and parr.; 23:1-36 and parr.).

of tradition is the most important for study of the historical Pharisees, for here they are criticized for specific rites which the Gospel writers believed they performed.

While the synoptic Gospels' picture of the Pharisees was complete by ca. 80 A.D., the rabbinical traditions occur in much later documents. The earliest, the Mishnah, reached its final form in ca. 200 A.D. Those documents--Mishnah, Tosefta, the two Talmuds--contain numerous sayings and stories which cannot be dated with any certainty, for they are not attributed to specific masters. Even if they were, we would have no way of verifying the accuracy of those attributions. Some of the sayings and stories allude to conditions in temple times; others contain no indication of the particular time and place to which reference is made. The corpus of anonymous rabbinical traditions compiled in the third and later centuries may contain significant materials deriving from pre-70 times. But we shall concentrate on those sayings and stories which indubitably allude to Pharisees before 70 A.D.⁶⁷

The appropriate rabbinical material comes from statements about fifteen men and the Houses of Hillel and Shammai. Consisting of approximately 371 stories, sayings, and allusions occurring in about 655 pericopes, these individual units betray marked Hillelite orientation. Some seventy-five percent pertain to Hillel and his associates.⁶⁸

Most of the nearly 700 pericopae pertaining to pre-70 Pharisees concern legal matters, and the largest number of these relate to, first, agricultural tithes, offerings, and other tabbos, and second, rules of ritual purity--that is, sectarian interests.⁶⁹ . . . Of the 341 individual Houses' legal pericopae, no fewer than 229, approximately 67 per cent of the whole, directly or indirectly concern table fellowship. The rest are scattered through all other areas of legal concern, forming a striking disproportion.⁷⁰ . . . If the Pharisees were primarily a group for Torah study, as the Dead Sea Scrolls' writers describe themselves, then we should have expected more rules about the school, perhaps also about scribal

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 81.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 82.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 83.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 86.

matters. In fact, we have only one, about sneezing in the school-house. . . . Neither do we find much interest in defining the master-disciple relationship, including the duties of the masters and the responsibilities and rights of the disciple. . . .⁷¹

In order to explain the divergent descriptions of the Pharisees in ancient sources, Neusner says that

Josephus' Pharisaic materials pertain mostly to the years from the rise of the Maccabees to their fall. They were a political party which tried to get control of the government of Jewish Palestine, not a little sect separated from society by observance of laws of common table-fellowship. Josephus' Pharisees are important in the reigns of John Hyrcanus and Alexander Jannaeus, but drop from the picture after Alexandra Salome.

On the other hand the Gospels' Pharisees, appropriately, are much like those of the rabbis and belong to the Roman period. Their legal agenda is virtually identical: tithing, purity laws, Sabbath observance, vows, and so on.

The rabbinical and New Testament traditions begin where Josephus' narrative leaves off, and the difference between them leads us to suspect that the change in the character of Pharisaism from political party to table-fellowship sect comes with Herod and his contemporary, Hillel. If Hillel was responsible for directing the party out of its activist, political concerns and into more irenic and quietistic paths, then we can understand why his figure dominates the subsequent rabbinic tradition. . . .⁷²

For a description of the historical Pharisees from the rabbinical literature, Neusner selects the traditions recorded between ca. A.D. 70-200, namely those from Yavneh (ca. A.D. 70-125), from Usha (ca. A.D. 140-170), and from the circle of Judah the Patriarch (ca. A.D. 170-210), editor of the Mishna.⁷³ He asks the following questions of this material:

What are the predominant traits and concerns of the traditions of each of these periods? How do their traditions about Pharisaic Judaism before 70 A.D. relate to their own interests, and what elements of their traditions may testify concerning the character of pre-70 Pharisaism.⁷⁴

⁷¹Ibid., p. 87.

⁷²Ibid., p. 91.

⁷³Ibid., pp. 92-95.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 96.

The academy at Yavneh claimed to possess the oral traditions of the pre-70 Pharisees, and their accounts of ancient stories and sayings are therefore very important. It is extremely interesting that in their entire corpus "no pre-70 Pharisee ever alludes to a teaching, story, or saying of another pre-70 Pharisee, except within the same pericope."⁷⁵ The stories give no indication that the master being described knew anything of rulings delivered by previous masters. This stands in stark contrast to Yavnean stratum of tradition in which numerous allusions are made to pre-70 masters, and provides evidence that the Yavnean academy sought to preserve the oral tradition of the pre-70 Pharisees.⁷⁶

Neusner proceeds to classify the Yavnean material on the pre-70 Pharisees according to form and themes. Through careful textual analysis he constructs a form history of the various pericopes and estimates their value as historical evidence. Finding that only random pericopes describe events of a historical nature, he stresses that the major concern of the rabbis at Yavneh was with the laws of the houses of Shammai and Hillel, not historical occurrences.⁷⁷

Neusner continues his form critical research on the traditions of Usha and finds that the Yavnean interests in purity and tithing laws continued to be a focus at Usha, with one important change. "Ushans clearly were involved in the development of a history of pre-70 Pharisaism. Nearly all historical pericopae for which we could find attestations derive from Ushans, particularly Judah b. Baba, Meir, and Judah."⁷⁸

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 99.

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Ibid., pp. 100-102.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 134.

However, since it is improbable that the Ushan rabbis possessed historical information on the pre-70 Pharisees unknown to the Yavneans, the historical validity of these stories is doubtful. They probably reflect the historical situation of the rabbis at Usha and are imaginative creations.⁷⁹

In a brief treatment of Judah the Patriarch, Neusner outlines how the rabbis of this time period further redacted the material on Hillel and Shammai⁸⁰ and thus brings his critical analysis of the documents to an end. His concluding chapter stresses that a careful study of the primary sources reveals more about the Pharisees after A.D. 70 than it does about pre-70 Pharisees.

The history of post-70 movements and individuals in Rome, Christianity, and rabbinical Judaism is formative for all three sources of information about pre-70 Pharisaism. That does not mean we know nothing about the Pharisees before the destruction of the Temple, but what we do know in detail is much less than what the sources claim to tell us. It also means that the sources that speak about pre-70 Pharisaic Judaism supply far more accurate information than has been recognized about their own circles.⁸²

The methodology of Neusner is much more rigorous than that of Rivkin. He does not readily accept the historicity of the information in any of the ancient sources, and form criticism plays a vital role in his study. He arranges the relevant units of tradition in the New Testament into five different categories and analyzes the historical validity of each. After dividing the rabbinic traditions into various strata, he postulates their form history through textual analysis, and thereby

⁷⁹Ibid., pp. 137-38.

⁸⁰Ibid., pp. 138-41.

⁸¹Ibid., pp. 143-44.

⁸²Ibid.

arrives at an estimate of their historical value. And, although form criticism does not apply to Josephus' books, Neusner does seek to interpret Josephus' motivations for writing.

A major strength of Neusner's approach is his appreciation of the different literary genres to which the primary sources belong. His method of analyzing each document varies with the type of literature it represents. Whether or not his unflinchingly critical analysis of the sources is overly skeptical is a matter of debate, but his attempt at patterning his approach in a manner he feels is consistent with each literary genre is admirable.

Conclusion

The previous reviews have shown that there is diversity of methodology among contemporary scholars. Neusner and Weiss take the issue of literary genre more seriously than Rivkin and Meyer, and estimations of the historical reliability of the primary sources differ widely among these men. However, one avenue of inquiry remains untouched by these scholars in their attempt to understand the material presented in the ancient documents, namely, that of literary structure. While unravelling the overall literary structure of Josephus' writings or the Tannaitic literature may or may not be a valid endeavor, such an approach is of great value in studying the Gospels. The self-conscious arrangement of tradition on the part of the Gospel authors provides a major clue to their purpose in writing. Although it is commonly accepted that the Gospel writers vary somewhat in their presentation of the Pharisees, the specific use of the Pharisees within the literary structure of each document does not appear to have been explored. Determination of how each Gospel author employed the Pharisees within his literary framework

could greatly illuminate their individual perspectives on the Pharisees and thus provide another step forward in the historical inquiry into this Jewish party. This thesis is therefore devoted to increasing the understanding of the authorial purposes and biases of the Gospel writers through a study of the literary structures of the Gospels of Mark and Matthew.

CHAPTER II

A NEW APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF THE PHARISEES

WITHIN THE GOSPELS OF MARK AND MATTHEW

Proper analysis of the ancient sources pertaining to the Pharisees remains a matter of debate among contemporary scholars. The diversity of approaches among major authors, as seen in the previous chapter, clearly reveals a lack of unanimity on methodology. Some believe that the study of the pre-70 Pharisees is at an impasse. Michael J. Cook is very pessimistic toward the possibility of arriving at any correct portrayal of this Jewish group and presents the following problems which he believes must be overcome: (1) the divergent pictures of the Pharisees given in the primary sources; (2) the contradictory material on the Pharisees contained within each primary source (e.g., Josephus gives both flattering and debasing descriptions of them.); (3) the tendency of Christian scholars to gravitate toward the New Testament description of the Pharisees as dry legalists, and the Jewish scholars' tendency to gravitate to Josephus and the rabbinic literature, producing a picture of the Pharisees as paragons of virtue; fact that all of the sources were redacted following the tremendous impact made by the A.D. 70 disaster on religion, culture, and politics.¹

Cook suggests that for a man to make a significant contribution to the study of the Pharisees he would need to be an expert in both the New Testament and the rabbinical literature. Yet each field is so

¹M. J. Cook, "Jesus and the Pharisees--The Problem as It Stands Today," Journal of Ecumenical Studies 15 (1978), pp. 445-54.

awesome and complex that few people have been able to master both. Consequently most attempts by rabbinites to study the Pharisees have been "deficient on the New Testament side, while New Testament scholars are often insecure in the rabbinic dimension."² Cook concludes by bemoaning the fact that scientific, critical study of rabbinic literature is decades behind critical study of the New Testament, and that even when such study is completed it is somewhat doubtful that the results will yield accurate historical information on the Pharisees.³

Although Cook's article is overly pessimistic, some of his arguments are very helpful. It is unnecessary to allow these problems to produce a despairing picture, however. Divergent pictures of the Pharisees within each ancient source should be welcomed as a sign of honesty, not viewed as a problem. If Josephus had given only positive information about the Pharisees, one might have more cause to doubt his witness, not less. Furthermore, Cook is probably wrong in saying that all the sources were "redacted" after A.D. 70. It is widely accepted that Mark's Gospel and the Pauline Corpus were written prior to A.D. 70,⁴ and there is little evidence of redaction work in the writings of Josephus.⁵

In Pharisaic studies today there is a great need for each ancient source to be examined for its own distinctive witness. Serious consideration must be given to the literary genre of each document so that the

²Ibid., p. 458.

³Ibid., p. 460.

⁴For a discussion of Mark's date of composition see W. L. Lane, The Gospel According to Mark (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), pp. 17-21. For a survey on Pauline dates see D. Guthrie, New Testament Introduction (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 1970).

⁵J. Neusner, Politics, op. cit., p. 44.

mistakes made in the past by Christian and Jewish scholars will not be repeated. Until more men can be highly trained in both New Testament and rabbinics, the most responsible course of action at this time is to have men concentrate on their areas of specialty. Cooperative efforts involving the labors of New Testament scholars and rabbinites will eliminate many of the problems encountered in the past.

As an example of utilizing a methodology which is consistent with a particular literary genre, this thesis seeks to explore, as a test case, the distinctive witnesses of Mark and Matthew to the Pharisees. Not only is the literary genre of these Gospels taken into consideration, but the unique point of view of each author is explored as well. To understand each author's point of view, careful attention is given to the literary structure of his Gospel and to how he uses the Pharisees as a means to accomplish his theological goal within his literary framework. Through discovering the function of the Pharisees in the literary structure of the Gospel, new light is shed on the author's purposes and biases. The result, a clearer understanding of why these Gospels contain their particular information on the Pharisees, brings about a better understanding of this historical party.

The following four questions provide an adequate basis for determining the distinctive witness to the Pharisees of Mark and Matthew:⁶

1. What relevant information is contained in each pericope in which the Pharisees either take an active role or are mentioned? (What does the pericope say about their theology, lifestyle, etc.?)

⁶Questions dealing with form-criticism and historicity of individual pericopes lie totally outside this thesis. The Gospels will be considered as completed literary units for the purpose of ascertaining each Gospel writer's individual point of view toward the Pharisees.

2. Of what significance is the author's placement of these pericopes within the literary framework of his Gospel? (How does the author use the pericopes in the development of his narrative framework and resulting theological message?)
3. What may be learned about the personal biases of Matthew by observing his redactional changes in Markan material dealing with the Pharisees?⁷ (Since there is a great amount of evidence that Matthew employed Mark as a source,⁸ this well-established theory will be employed in order to detect authorial bias through observing changes made on Markan pericopes.)
4. In light of questions 1-3 what is the overall picture of the Pharisees given by each author?

Although these questions are treated responsibly, the limited nature of this study imposes certain restrictions on the quantity of evidence presented to verify the findings. The purpose of the thesis is not to accomplish an exhaustive treatment but to provide a somewhat broadly based introductory study. Therefore a more detailed analysis must be deferred until a later time. It is with the intention of

⁷The use of redaction criticism in New Testament studies owes much to three ground-breaking studies on the Synoptic Gospels: G. Bornkamm, "The Stilling of the Storm in St. Matthew," in G. Bornkamm, G. Barth, and H. J. Held, Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), pp. 52-57; H. Conzelmann, The Theology of St. Luke (New York: Harper and Row, 1960); W. Marxen, Mark the Evangelist (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1969). Working independently of each other, Bornkamm, Conzelmann, and Marxen arrived at similar conclusions concerning the nature of the Gospels. Each man presented convincing evidence that the Gospel writers were not merely passing on tradition, but were skillfully arranging and modifying tradition according to their own theological themes. Marxen, who formulated the term *Redaktionsgeschichte*, provides a description of redaction-criticism as a method on pp. 15-29.

⁸For a standard presentation of the evidence see B. H. Streeter, The Four Gospels (London: Macmillan and Co., 1924), pp. 151-98.

providing impetus for further and more complete studies of the individual witness to the Pharisees that this thesis is devoted. The new insights presented in this work demonstrate the need to consider seriously the literary structure of the Gospels in historical studies of the Pharisees.

CHAPTER III

THE PHARISEES ACCORDING TO MARK

Mark's Gospel stands as a milestone of literary achievement in the ancient world.¹ The kind of witness document which Mark produced was adopted by other Christian authors, but there appears to be no parallel for this type of literature before his time. Although scholars differ in their evaluations of the quality of his Greek, it has been generally accepted in recent years that behind the final structure of Mark's Gospel is a well-defined purpose which gives unity to the document.

Writing in a style that bursts with action, Mark strings together sentence after sentence paratactically. Frequent use of the adverb "immediately" further creates a feeling of rapid movement and connection of events. The story moves with purpose in a single direction, toward the passion narrative.

Mark has often been described as "a passion narrative with an extended introduction,"² and this description highlights the purpose and internal cohesiveness of the Gospel. Jesus is the Messiah who has come to offer his life as a ransom for many (10:45), and Mark explains not only why this happened but also how it happened.

¹See Paul J. Achtemeier, Mark (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), pp. 1-10; and W. L. Lane, The Gospel According to Mark (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), pp. 1-2.

²Martin Kähler first used this phrase in The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic Biblical Christ, trans. of the 1896 edition by C. E. Braaten (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), p. 80.

Movement toward the passion is swift and sure, with opposition to Jesus arising very early in the narrative and rapidly intensifying. Among the various sources of opposition the Pharisees play one of the leading roles, and their presence in the story is of primary importance in directing the action toward the passion. The way in which Mark employs tradition about the Pharisees within the literary structure of his Gospel provides valuable insight into the information which he provides his readers concerning this Jewish party. Mark's purpose in writing seems to have been instrumental both in his selection of appropriate material and in his final arrangement of it. Therefore it is imperative to take seriously his literary ordering of tradition when attempting to understand the historical value of Mark's information on the Pharisees.

Mark's introductory material extends either through 1:13 or 1:15.³ With the announcement that "the kingdom of God is at hand" (1:15) the narrative explodes into a rapid succession of events characterized by the phrase "and immediately."⁴ This rapid pace carries the story into a topically arranged series of conflict narratives which many believe were brought together before Mark wrote his Gospel (2:1-3:6).⁵

³For a full discussion of the extent of Mark's introduction see W. L. Lane, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-40. Lane argues convincingly that the introduction extends through 1:13.

⁴1:18, 20, 21, 23, 28, 29, 30, 42, 43.

⁵W. L. Lane, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

The major theme of Jesus' authority in 1:14-45⁶ continues to be developed in 2:1-3:6,⁷ providing continuity in the narrative.

Although Jesus experiences conflict in 1:14-45, it comes exclusively from the demonic realm.⁸ Not until 2:6 does Jesus encounter opposition from men, and at this point the opposition is primarily a shocked expression of disbelief by some scribes in response to his statement, "Son, your sins are forgiven" (2:5). Mark provides no introductory comments concerning the identity of the scribes. They merely appear in the narrative unannounced as do all of the other representatives of Jewish religious parties which play a role in the Gospel.⁹ Because Mark fails to designate which religious party the scribes of 2:6-7 represent, this story will not be used to contribute toward an understanding of the Markan Pharisees. However, the next

⁶Mark reveals that Jesus has authority to call men to follow him (1:16-20), to teach in an authoritative manner unlike the scribes (1:21-22), to cast out unclean spirits (1:23-27, 34, 39), and to heal illnesses and diseases (1:30-34, 40-45).

⁷In this section Jesus has the authority to forgive sins (2:5-12), to make authoritative pronouncements as Lord of the Sabbath (2:27-28), and to overrule Pharisaic oral tradition in order to heal on the Sabbath (3:1-6).

⁸The leper's disobedience in 1:45 should not be viewed as a deliberate attempt to thwart Jesus' ministry.

⁹Occasionally Mark does provide details on religious beliefs or practices. E.g., 7:3-4 briefly explains Pharisaic ritual washings, and 12:18 informs the reader that Sadducees do not believe in the resurrection. Nevertheless the amount of explanatory material is scanty and one might conjecture that Mark fully expected those men who read his Gospel aloud to others to be able to answer such questions as the listeners would ask about Jewish parties and religious customs.

pericope provides the beginning point in the study of the Markan Pharisees, for here Jesus' opponents are specified as "scribes of the Pharisees" (2:16).¹⁰

In 2:13-17 the point of controversy between Jesus and the Pharisaic scribes is over his indiscriminate manner of eating with people regardless of their religious posture. Evidently these scribes accepted Jesus as a man of some religious standing and were shocked and upset that he would eat with sinful people. Pharisaic scribes were very careful to tithe all their food and to eat in a condition of ceremonial cleanness.¹¹ They would not eat with people who did not share their convictions for fear that they might be eating untithed or

¹⁰In normal Jewish usage the term "scribe" (γραμματεὺς) is a "translation of the Hebrew שֹׁטֵר (Aram. ܣܬܪܐ) which means a 'man learned in the Torah,' a 'rabbi,' an 'ordained theologian,'" J. Jeremias, "γραμματεὺς," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. I, ed. G. Kittel, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), p. 740. Jeremias adds "The rabbis formed a closed order. Only fully qualified scholars, who by ordination had received the official spirit of Moses, mediated by succession (Str.-B., II, 654 f.; cf. Mt. 23:2), were legitimate members of the guild of scribes" (p. 741).

It is quite likely that scribes exerted tremendous influence on Jewish society during the first century A.D. Scribes not only constituted a powerful part of the Sanhedrin, but were also the "backbone of the Pharisaic movement," S. Safrai, "Jewish Self-Government," in The Jewish People in the First Century, vol. I, ed. S. Safrai and M. Stern (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), p. 384. J. Jeremias says that the Pharisees so venerated their scribes that they gave them unconditional obedience, Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), p. 243. (Jeremias lists no primary sources for his statement.) It is therefore not without significance that Mark's first mention of Pharisees occurs when a group of scribes belonging to the Pharisaic party (οἱ γραμματεῖς τῶν φαρισαίων) comes to question Jesus' lifestyle (2:16).

¹¹For information on ceremonial cleansing see the material on Mk. 7:1 ff.

ceremonially unclean food. Therefore when Jesus was seen eating with "tax collectors and sinners" his religious ethics were called into question.¹²

The term "sinners" is technical in this context for a class of people who were regarded by the Pharisees as inferior because they showed no interest in the scribal tradition. With the derisive epithet "the people of the land" ('am ha-areš), the scribes often dismissed as inconsequential the common people who possessed neither time nor inclination to regulate their conduct by Pharisaic standards. They were particularly despised because they did not eat their food in a state of ceremonial cleanness and because they failed to separate the tithe.¹³

Therefore, by ignoring the Pharisaic practice of segregated table fellowship, Jesus came into direct conflict with their accepted norms of behavior. Unapologetically he informs the Pharisees that he has not come to call the righteous, but sinners (1:17), a reply which must be interpreted in light of its larger context.

The statement is located in a series of conflict stories in which opposition to Jesus steadily increases in intensity. Consequently it would seem out of character with the tenor of 2:1-3:6 for Jesus to be complimenting the Pharisaic scribes on their righteousness in 2:17. Within the context of this section devoted to exposing the rapid and unjust development of opposition toward Jesus, it seems best to understand his statement as being tinged with irony. The Pharisees believe they are righteous, but their refusal to reach out to the outcasts of

¹²S. E. Johnson, A Commentary on the Gospel According to Mark (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1960), p. 61, gives several examples of hostility between Pharisees and sinners in rabbinic writings. R. Hillel said, "No 'am ha-aretz is religious." R. Akiba (c. A.D. 132) said, "When I was an 'am ha-aretz I used to say, 'If I could get hold of one of the scholars I would bite him like an ass.' 'You mean, like a dog,' said his disciples. 'No,' said Akiba, 'an ass's bite breaks bones.'" (Unfortunately Johnson does not cite his texts.)

¹³W. L. Lane, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

society reveals that their definition of righteousness is vastly different from that of Jesus. His reply therefore carries with it a tone of condemnation, not affirmation. "Jesus had not come to call for the kingdom of God men like the scribes who considered themselves to be righteous, but outcasts who knew they needed to be made whole."¹⁴

In the next story of the conflict series, Mk. 2:18-22, there is a continued scrutiny of Jesus' religious behavior. Although Mark does not identify the people who ask Jesus why his disciples do not fast, the issue again concerns personal piety and focuses on an observed deficiency in Jesus' religious practices. Since the Pharisees regularly fasted on Monday and Thursday¹⁵ and evidently John and his followers also fasted as a religious discipline, the fact that Jesus and his disciples did not fast certainly raised questions.

Although fasting among the Pharisees is known to have been common, Mark's reference to the "disciples of the Pharisees" is somewhat perplexing because the Pharisees as a group had no disciples per se, but only adherents.¹⁶ It is quite unnecessary to conclude that Mark was "inaccurate,"¹⁷ however. W. L. Lane points out that, although the Pharisees as such did not have disciples, individual Pharisaic scribes did. He believes that the designation "disciples of the Pharisees" is not a technical term but a reference to "that larger

¹⁴Ibid., p. 105. Lane provides an expanded examination of the form of this pericope on pp. 105-107 which is very illuminating.

¹⁵E.g., Lk. 8:12; Didache 8:1.

¹⁶E. Schweizer, The Good News According to Mark (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1970), p. 67.

¹⁷H. Branscomb, The Gospel of Mark (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1937), p. 53.

group of people who were influenced by Pharisaic ideals and practice."¹⁸ Lane's conclusion may be supplemented by observing the way Mark has structured the parallel references to Pharisees in v. 18:

Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. . . .How is it that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?¹⁹

Three groups of people are compared in this verse. Two of the groups are followers of individual men, but the third group consists of members of a particular Jewish party. This third group is called "the Pharisees" in 2:18a, and "the disciples of the Pharisees" in 2:18b. The terms are synonymous, and it is quite reasonable that Mark employed "disciples of the Pharisees" in order to harmonize the comparison of the practices of three groups of people, two of which were disciples of a particular person. Such unity of designation may serve to strengthen the contrast between Jesus' followers, the disciples of John, and the Pharisees. If this is the case, Mark 2:18 makes no comment on the structure of the Pharisaic party but merely describes one of their religious practices, namely the discipline of regular fasting.

Mark 2:23-28 forms the first of two Sabbath controversy stories. As in the previous two instances, the issue of debate concerns the religious behavior of Jesus and his disciples. However, this time the Pharisees are recorded as specifically calling an action "illegal." They believe that Jesus' disciples have committed a breach of the Sabbath rest by illegally reaping grain on the Sabbath. Had the action occurred on any other day it would have been permissible (cf. Deut.23:25);

¹⁸W. L. Lane, op. cit., p. 108.

¹⁹All scripture quotations, unless designated otherwise, are from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

but, according to the Pharisaic oral law, rubbing husks of grain in one's hands in order to obtain the kernels was an act of reaping and therefore illegal on the Sabbath.²⁰

At this point Mark begins to indicate with increasing clarity that the source of tension between Jesus and the Pharisees is the question of the authority of oral tradition. Though the Pharisees accept it as authoritative, Jesus does not. When they approach him they do not ask if he thinks his disciples are justified in picking heads of grain. They clearly state that the action is unlawful and demand to know why it is occurring.

For the Pharisees a breach of oral law was a serious matter, and Jesus' lack of conformity to the oral tradition occasioned their wrath. His cavalier attitude toward the cornerstone of Pharisaic piety results in a rapidly developing hatred, as the last incident in this conflict series reveals.

In 3:1-6 Pharisaic opposition progresses beyond the questioning and condemning of 2:1-28 and culminates in an assassination plot. Rather than asking questions about Jesus' behavior, the Pharisees are now pictured by Mark as openly looking for a reason to accuse him. They find such a reason when Jesus commits another breach of their oral law. During a synagogue service on the Sabbath, they wait to see if he will heal a man with a withered hand. Since their oral tradition specified that healing could only take place on the Sabbath if a person's life were

²⁰Cf. M. Shabbath VII. 2; TJ Shabbath VII. 2, 9c.

in danger,²¹ Jesus would be guilty of breaking the Sabbath rest if he healed the man.

The Markan account creates an impression that the Pharisees are a paradigm of evil. Completely unconcerned about the pathos of human need, they stare through wicked eyes at Jesus, hoping he will heal the man so that they can accuse him. Jesus is infuriated at their lack of humane concern and "deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts" (3:5). Compassionately he breaks the oral tradition which would hinder him from doing good on the Sabbath, and deliberately gives the Pharisees an occasion to condemn him. As a final touch to his portrait of Pharisaic evil, Mark states that the Pharisees went out and plotted with the Herodians how they might murder Jesus. Merciless and cruel, they now seek companionship in their crime from the Herodians.

At this point the Pharisees are implacably opposed to Jesus, for he has openly defied their oral law by healing a man on the Sabbath whose life was definitely not in danger. The depth of their commitment to oral tradition is revealed in their unlikely camaraderie with the politically-minded Herodians, men who were far removed ideologically from the Pharisees.

Apart from one reference in Josephus [War I. xvi. 6 (319); cf. Ant. XIV. xv. 10 (450)], the Herodians are not mentioned in any other ancient source, a fact which indicates that they were not a sect or an organized party. The word is of Latin formation (Herodiani), designating "adherents" or "partisans" of Herod; in Galilee this would mean Herod Antipas. . . Their concern with tribute money in Ch. 12:13 indicates that they were also loyal to the Roman control of Palestine upon which the Herodian dynasty depended. Undoubtedly

²¹W. L. Lane, op. cit., pp. 122-23. Lane cites the following sources: Mekilta, Tractate Shabbata I (ed. Lauterbach III, pp. 198-205); Tractate Nezikin (ed. Lauterbach III, pp. 38-40); M. Yoma VIII. 6: "Whenever there is doubt whether life is in danger this takes precedence over the Sabbath."

they lent their support to the Pharisees because they saw Jesus as a threat to the peace and stability of the tetrarchy. The history of Herodian Galilee is marked by popular uprisings under the leadership of quasi-messianic figures, and they may have envisioned that Jesus posed this kind of peril to the land.²²

Ironically this unlikely union of the Pharisees and Herodians reveals that the Pharisees were willing to join forces with a group loyal to Rome, who backed the much-hated Antipas, in an effort to murder a man whom they did not consider to be an 'am ha-ares (2:16). Joining forces with secular political activists who would be considered part of the 'am ha-ares, they formed a deep union of purpose with men with whom they would not share table-fellowship. So strong was their commitment to oral tradition that they overlooked the dubious nature of their treacherous activities on the Sabbath. Not only did they plot murder on the Sabbath, but they did it with "sinners."

Thus very early in the Gospel Mark has pictured the rapidly developing antagonism between Jesus and the scribes and Pharisees. This antagonism is not based on any accusation that Jesus or his disciples have broken the Mosaic law. The conflict rests squarely on the issue of oral tradition, and Mark has dramatically shown his readers that the Pharisees' commitment to tradition leads them into evil.

What is dramatically pictured in 3:1-6 is explicitly stated in 7:1 ff., where Jesus forcefully condemns the oral law. Chapter 7:1 ff. is a key text both in terms of Mark's description of the Pharisees and in the development of his Christology. In this passage Mark brings his picture of Pharisaic evil to culmination and thoroughly condemns their oral tradition. But he also uses the argument between Jesus and the

²²Ibid., pp. 124-25.

Pharisees over defilement as a transition point, after which it becomes clear that the Messiah has come for all people, not just for the Jews.

In 7:1 ff. Mark pictures the Pharisees lurking around Jesus with watchful eyes, quick to observe mistakes in his disciples. This accusing group consists of Pharisees and some "scribes who had come from Jerusalem" (7:1).²³ The purpose of this visit from Jerusalem scribes was quite possibly to conduct a detailed theological investigation. Clearly these were Pharisaic scribes, for their complaint to Jesus is based on oral tradition. Together with some Pharisees of lesser rank, probably local residents, they demand to know why Jesus' disciples do not live according to the "tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with 'unclean' hands" (7:5). Mark's explanatory addition concerning ceremonial washings (7:3-4) both clarifies the Pharisaic oral tradition for his readers and also hints at his own personal feelings toward the oral law.²⁴

²³Note that a similar group of scribes from Jerusalem criticized Jesus in 3:22. W. L. Lane believes the scribes in 3:22 were probably an official delegation sent by the Sanhedrin "to examine Jesus' miracles and to determine whether Capernaum should be declared a 'seduced city,' the prey of an apostate preacher. Such a declaration required a thorough investigation made on the spot by official envoys in order to determine the extent of the defection and to distinguish between the instigators, the apostates and the innocent," op. cit., p. 140. Lane cites E. Stauffer, Jesus and His Story (New York, 1960), pp. 85, 207. "Stauffer appeals to Deut. 13:15; Pseudo Philo, Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum 25:3-6, 8; M. Sanh. X. 4. Acts 5:27-40 verifies the interest and involvement of the Sanhedrin in such matters."

²⁴Mark specifies, "For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they wash their hands." This statement seems odd, especially since the Pharisee's accusation was that Jesus' Jewish disciples did not wash (7:2, 5). One need not, however, conclude with H. Branscomb, op. cit., p. 122, that "The parenthesis which begins with verse 3 is in error." W. L. Lane, op. cit., p. 245, comments, "In generalizing his explanation Mark was following accepted Jewish practice in describing Jewish customs to a Gentile audience. A close parallel is provided by the Letter of Aristaeas § 305: 'And as the custom of all the Jews, they washed their hands and prayed to God.'"

Although 7:3-4a is straightforward and factual, 7:4b, "and they observe many other traditions. . . ," seems to reveal a certain amount of impatience with the mass of legal detail imposed by the oral tradition. In his description Mark says that the Pharisees: (1) never eat until they have washed their hands;²⁵ (2) do not eat when they come from the market place unless they wash;²⁶ and (3) wash cooking and eating utensils.²⁷ Thus the Pharisees were very concerned with the matter of ritual washings, specifying various kinds of washing for different occasions. Failure on the part of Jesus' disciples to follow the Pharisaic ritual washings aroused indignation in the Pharisees, yet their indignation is overshadowed by the heated emotion exhibited by Jesus in reaction to their accusation.

Jesus charges that in spite of the Pharisees' hypocritical outward show of piety, their actions do not proceed from hearts seeking to honor God. Although they exhibit strict obedience to oral law, Jesus condemns them as being in rebellion to the will of God as it is expressed in Scripture. He charges that in many ways the clear commands of God are pre-empted by the mandates of their oral tradition, citing as an example the practice of Corban.

Corban (κορβαν) is a transliteration of the Hebrew $\int \frac{2}{7} ? R$ meaning an offering or gift devoted to God. To pronounce something

²⁵Mark uses the term $\pi \upsilon \chi \mu \eta \nu \acute{\iota} \psi \omega \nu \tau \alpha \iota$, a difficult term which specifies that water be poured on cupped hands. See W. L. Lane, op. cit., p. 242, n. 3, and p. 246.

²⁶Mark employs the term $\beta \alpha \pi \tau \acute{\iota} \sigma \omega \nu \tau \alpha \iota$, which refers to the immersing of the fingers into water, *ibid.*, p. 247. According to Lane the hands were dipped into water up to the joint where the fingers join the hand (TB Hulin 106a).

²⁷The term used is $\beta \alpha \pi \tau \iota \sigma \mu \acute{o} \varsigma$ and indicates that these utensils were immersed or bathed in water.

corban was to dedicate it for sacred use, making it unavailable for profane use by another person. Such a pronouncement constituted a vow which the Pharisees considered binding regardless of circumstances. According to J. D. M. Derrett, corban referred to two kinds of vows: (1) a dedication of property, including assured future assets, to God; and (2) a vow of abstinence. In the second case a man vowed to abstain from using what would otherwise be his property "and the asset would be to him as if it were dedicated to God."²⁸ Derrett explains that in situations of family conflict a son might in great anger tell his parents, "Whatever you might have gained from me is corban!" "In so doing he became liable to pay the value of this into the temple treasury."²⁹ Afterward, when the heat of emotion had cooled, though the man might regret his rash statement, the binding nature of oaths, as stipulated in oral law, would not allow for him to retract his pronouncement. The vow had to be paid, and thus a clear scriptural command to honor one's parents (Ex. 20:12; Dt. 5:16) was obliterated by an oath taken in the heat of anger.

Jesus' concluding accusation against the Pharisees, "And you do many things like that," is very similar to the rather ironic statement of Mark in 7:4, "And they observe many other traditions. . . ." Thus

²⁸J. D. M. Derrett, "KORBAN HO ESTIN DORAN," New Testament Studies 16 (1970): 364. He cites Jos. Contra Apion 1:66 ff. as an example of the second type of vow.

²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 365. For an opposing view on payment to the temple see W. L. Lane, *op. cit.*, p. 250-51. Lane comments, "In the hypothetical situation proposed by Jesus, if the son declared his property qorban to his parents, he neither promised it to the temple nor prohibited its use to himself, but he legally excluded his parents from the right of benefit" (Z. W. Falk, "On Talmudic Vows," HTR 59 (1966), pp. 309-312. G. W. Buchanan, "Some Vow and Oath Formulas in the New Testament," HTR 58 (1965), pp. 319-324). Cf. M. Nedarim V. 6.

the saying attributed to Jesus and the Markan parenthetical expression speak as one voice against the volume of legal pronouncements in the oral law. The Pharisees are condemned as being meticulously religious people whose mass of religious observance, based on the "tradition of men," often stands in direct opposition to the "commandment of God" (7:8). Such religion is labeled "vain" or to "no purpose" (μᾶτην), a hypocritical expression of external piety.

Jesus' rejection of the Pharisaic definition of uncleanness leads to his own statement on the nature of defilement. Defining defilement as something which stems from an internal condition of the heart (7:14 ff.), his definition stands in stark contrast to the more externally based view of the Pharisees. In radical contradistinction to Pharisaic opinion, Jesus asserts that strict obedience to oral tradition does not necessarily produce purity of heart. The impact of this statement on the church may be seen in a Markan editorial comment within this pericope.

Mark 7:19b is almost certainly an editorial addition, providing an interpretive statement on the implications of Jesus' teaching. This brief remark, καθαρίζων πάντα τὰ βρώματα, is obviously not a part of Jesus' teaching, but is a reflection on its importance. Two observations verify this. First, v. 19b simply does not match the sentence structure or content of v. 19a. Second, v. 20 resumes the teaching of Jesus with the introductory ἔλεγεν δὲ ὅτι.³⁰

The language of Mk. 7:19b-23 closely parallels that of Acts 10:11-15; 11:4-9; where, in a vision, Peter is told by God, through

³⁰W. L. Lane, op. cit., pp. 255-58, thinks that 7:20-23 is an indirect rather than a direct quotation of Jesus' statement. Lane believes that the symmetrical arrangement of the list in v. 23 shows catechetical influence, and postulates that 7:19b-23 forms a Markan interpretation of Jesus' words.

the illustration of eating unclean animals, not to regard Gentiles as unclean. Peter clearly understands the vision to mean that the Gentiles are considered clean, i.e., suitable to receive the Gospel (Acts 10:28). After his mission to Cornelius' household, when he was criticized by the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem (Acts 11:1-3), Peter vindicated his actions by recounting the vision sent by God (Acts 11:4-10). The account in Acts 10-11 is one of the clearest indications of the early Jewish Christians' struggles to accept the Gentiles on an equal basis.³¹ The literary structure of Mk. 7 provides a clear indication that Mark is making a theological statement on this major issue of the early church by his ordering of the tradition.

Mark's theological intent may be seen in the positioning of the story about the Syrophoenician woman immediately following the account of Jesus' teaching on uncleanness in 7:14-23. Great emphasis is given to the fact that this woman is a Gentile ("a Greek, a Syrophoenician by birth," 7:26). The sequence of events is similar to those in Acts 10 where Peter receives the vision correcting his view of uncleanness and then goes to a Gentile household. In Mk. 2:14-23 Jesus corrects an inadequate view of uncleanness and the very next event finds him dialoging with a Gentile woman in the Gentile environment of Tyre, interestingly enough, employing the imagery of eating.

The Syrophoenician woman, in response to Jesus' difficult statement, "Let the children first be fed, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs" (v. 27),³² reveals not only

³¹Cf., Gal. 1-2; Acts 15, etc.

³²For a full discussion of this difficult passage see W. L. Lane, *op. cit.*, pp. 259-64. Lane points out that although the Jews did employ the derogatory term "dogs" in reference to Gentiles (e.g., TB Hagigah 13a; Pirque Rabbi Eliezer 29; Exodus Rabba IX. 2 on 7:9), there is no parallel

that she believes Jesus can heal her daughter but that she is capable of an intelligent and witty reply (v. 28). Jesus obviously approves of her response, for he grants her request, which, in the language of their dialogue, amounts to some "crumbs" off his table. This Gentile woman has faith and intelligence, in contrast to the hardened unbelief of the Pharisees. Consequently Mark shows that the supposedly unclean Gentile joyfully receives crumbs from Jesus' table, shortly after the critical assault of the Pharisees against Jesus' disciples for eating with unclean hands.

This theme of feeding the Gentiles finds further verification in the larger context within which Mk. 7:1-30 is located. The feeding of the 5,000 (6:30-44), when compared to the feeding of the 4,000 (8:1-9), reveals a concern to show that Jesus has come to feed both Jew and Gentile. This is clearly seen in the differences in detail between the two feedings. A pronounced Jewish imagery may be detected in the first feeding which is absent from the second. The first setting is in the wilderness (ἐρημος, 6:31, 32, 35) where Jesus has taken his disciples to find rest. God's provision of rest for his people in the wilderness is a frequent theme in the Old Testament,³³ and Jesus' description of the people as

to Jesus' use of the diminutive "little dogs" in a pejorative sense (p. 262). Appealing to the setting of the story in the Hellenistic city of Tyre and the Hellenistic background of the woman, Lane states that it is doubtful that Jesus meant "Gentiles" when he said "dogs." Rather, he was referring to the Hellenistic custom of allowing little dogs to be under the table during meals, and pointing out that it is inappropriate to stop the meal in order to feed the dogs. This would therefore fit the context of 7:24 ff. where Jesus' reason for going to Tyre was to rest, and it was inappropriate for the woman to disturb that rest. Her shrewd reply acknowledges Jesus' statement, but points out that it does not stop the meal for the children to toss crumbs on the floor for the dogs.

³³Ibid., p. 225 (Dt. 3:20; 12:9 f.; 25:19; Josh. 1:13, 15, 21:44; Ps. 95:7-11; Is. 63:14; Jer. 31:2).

"sheep without a shepherd" (6:34) seems to allude to Num. 21:17 and Ezk. 34:5. In this wilderness setting Jesus has the people sit down in groups of hundreds and fifties on the green grass (6:39-40),³⁴ which is strongly reminiscent of Ex. 18:21 where Moses similarly divided the people in the wilderness.³⁵ Further Jewish imagery is seen in the term used for the baskets (κοφίνων, 6:43) in which the leftover fragments were collected. The κοφίνων were small wicker baskets commonly carried by the Jews in which they put "such items as a light lunch and general odds and ends. They were so much a symbol of the Jew that Juvenal twice described him [the Jew] with reference to the cophinus."³⁶

Mark locates the second miraculous feeding in the Decapolis (cf. 7:31 ff.), a region consisting of a mixed population of Jews and Gentiles. In this incident, quite unlike the first feeding, no mention is made of the wilderness. Furthermore, Jesus tells his disciples he has compassion on the crowd, not because they are like "sheep without a shepherd" (6:34), but because they had not eaten in three days (8:2). Jesus tells the crowd to sit down on the "ground" (8:6), not on the green grass in hundreds and fifties (6:39-40). After the feeding is completed, seven baskets (σπυρίδας) of leftover fragments were collected (8:8), not twelve κοφίνων. The σπυρίς was a rope or mat basket, large enough that one was used to lower Paul from the wall of Damascus (Acts 9:25). Because the feeding of the 4,000 lacks the vivid Jewish

³⁴C.f. Ezk. 34:26-29. The wilderness will become a pasture where the true shepherd will feed his flock. In Ps. 23:1 the Lord causes his people to "lie down in green pastures."

³⁵W. L. Lane, op. cit., p. 229, points out that the Essenes at Qumran used these subdivisions "to describe true Israel assembled in the desert in the period of the last days" (CD xiii. 1; 1QS ii. 21; 1QSa i. 14 f.; 1QM iv. 1-5).

³⁶Ibid., p. 231, n. 109 (Satires iii. 14; vi. 542).

imagery of the first feeding, it may well reflect Mark's desire to portray Jew and Gentile gathered together, eating food provided by Jesus the Messiah, a picture of the universal nature of Christ's purpose for the church.³⁷

Thus Mark's literary intentions are clear. After picturing the feeding of the 5,000 people in a Jewish setting, the narrative progresses toward a definition of uncleanness radically different from that of the Pharisees (7:14-23). This definition is given immediate application in the Syrophoenician woman; who, by receiving the crumbs from the children's table, prefigures the scene in 8:1-9 where the Messiah feeds both Jew and Gentile. Before Jesus feeds the unclean Gentiles the true meaning of uncleanness is exposed, and Mark uses the Pharisees as instruments to bring about this corrected understanding.

Following the feeding of the 4,000 Mark provides a brief story of some Pharisees coming to Jesus in order to test him by asking for a sign from heaven. What exactly the Pharisees wanted Jesus to provide as a sign is not readily apparent. However, they were probably not looking for a "cosmic miracle of apocalyptic nature" as E. Schweizer believes.³⁸ It is also unlikely that they were seeking yet another miracle such as the ones he had been performing. Conceivably they desired some sign that Jesus' power came from heaven. S. E. Johnson says that rabbis were sometimes asked to give proof of the validity of their teaching, citing as evidence the situation in John 2:18 where Jesus is asked for a sign

³⁷Ibid., pp. 274-75.

³⁸E. Schweizer, op. cit., p. 159

of his authority after he had expelled the merchants from the temple.³⁹ Johnson believes the Pharisees were asking for an "audible or visible sign from heaven."⁴⁰ Such a sign would be similar to the heavenly echoes supposedly heard by the rabbis at Jamnia which confirmed God's approval of certain beliefs.⁴¹

The Pharisees' insincerity is amply illustrated by Jesus' response. Not only does he emphatically deny their request, but he turns his back on them; and, getting into a boat, recrosses the lake of Galilee. The situation is similar to that of 3:22 where the scribes accuse Jesus of performing his exorcisms by the power of Satan, an accusation seemingly based on their previous conclusion that he was not living as a pious man should. In 8:11 they have already concluded that Jesus is not from God and are simply trying to verify this. Their ungodliness is made clear in 8:15 where Jesus warns his disciples, "Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod (cf. 3:6; 12:13)."⁴²

Chapter 9 ends the Galilean phase of Jesus' ministry in Mark, and from 10:1 ff. "the narrative moves swiftly and relentlessly toward its inevitable climax in Jerusalem."⁴³ At the very beginning of the

³⁹S. E. Johnson, op. cit., p. 142. Unfortunately Johnson does not take into account the unique significance of the term "signs" in the Gospel of John.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Tos. Sot. 13:7.

⁴²W. L. Lane, op. cit., p. 280. "In both Jewish and Hellenistic circles leaven was a common metaphor for corruption" (TB Berachoth 17a; Plutarch, Moralia II, 659B; I Cor. 5:6-8; Gal. 5:9).

⁴³Ibid., p. 352.

events in Judea the Pharisees appear in the narrative, opposing Jesus by testing him with a question about divorce (10:2). Unlike the context of the conflict series in 2:1-3:6, this pericope is located in a section whose dominant theme is the qualification for entry into the Kingdom of God (cf. 9:42-47; 10:13-16, 17-31). Sandwiched between a severe warning against leading people astray (9:42-50) and a strong statement that "whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a little child shall not enter it" (10:16), the Pharisees are presented as hard-hearted opponents seeking to trick Jesus. Their theologically-oriented question seems ironic in light of the fact that they are shown to be hypocritical leaders who cause people to go astray.

As in Mk. 8:11 the Pharisees come to "test" Jesus with their insincere questioning. Mark pictures them as calculating, evil adversaries whose predetermined judgment that Jesus is impious serves as a basis for their attempt to trap him in a situation which may lead to his arrest.

Although divorce was a matter of theological dispute among Pharisees, their question probably carries a greater weight of seriousness within this Markan context.

The question of the lawfulness of divorce and remarriage had been the immediate occasion for John the Baptist's denunciation of Herod Antipas and Herodias (Ch. 6:17 f.) and had led to his violent death. . . . The intention behind the question, apparently, was to compromise Jesus in Herod's eyes, perhaps in the expectation that the tetrarch would seize him even as he had John.⁴⁴

Thus the Pharisees are pictured by Mark as using subtle tactics in order to trap Jesus and ultimately cause his death. No longer resorting to issues of debate over their oral law, they now appeal to a political concern calculated to endanger Jesus with the Herodian authorities.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 354.

The last appearance of the Pharisees occurs in Mk. 12:13-17, within a series of conflict stories occurring in Jerusalem. In this conflict series the Pharisees are one of several Jewish religious groups who confront Jesus and suffer defeat from his brilliant answers to their questions. Portrayed as messengers of the Sanhedrin,⁴⁵ the Pharisees approach Jesus in an attempt to "catch him in his words" (12:13). Once again they are teamed with the Herodians (cf. 3:6), and together they confront Jesus with the political controversy of taxation.

The way they formulate their question reveals a well-conceived plot to place Jesus in an impossible situation. Roman taxation was an odious burden for most Jews, a distasteful sign of their subjection to a heathen nation. Stamped upon the Denarius, the only legal currency for paying taxes, was the image of the emperor Tiberius portrayed as "the semi-divine son of the god Augustus and the goddess Livia."⁴⁶ For pious Jews the affront of having to pay taxes to heathen overlords with money whose inscription proclaimed the dominion of the powerful emperor cult constituted a great indignity as well as an economic hardship. When the Roman tax was first imposed in A.D. 6, Jewish zealots under the leadership of Judas the Galilean refused to pay the tax and revolted. For these men taxation was an affront to the sovereignty of God and a sign of slavery.⁴⁷

⁴⁵That Mark places the Sanhedrin behind this mission can be seen in the progression of events in Mk. 11-12. In 11:27 ff. members of the Sanhedrin question Jesus' authority. In response he tells a parable against them which infuriates them (12:1-12). This same group sends the Pharisees and Herodians to trap Jesus (12:12-13).

⁴⁶W. L. Lane, op. cit., p. 424.

⁴⁷Jos. Ant. XVIII. 1:1.

Although the Pharisees of Jesus' time deeply resented the humiliation of paying taxes, the pro-Roman Herodians supported taxation. Therefore their question, "Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Should we pay them, or should we not?" (12:14b-15a), placed Jesus in an almost impossible situation. If he said "yes," the Pharisees could make his name odious among the Jewish people. If he said "no," the Herodians could endanger him at the hands of Roman officials.

The Markan narrative acknowledges that Jesus knew their hypocrisy; and his initial response, "Why put me to the test?" (v. 15), seems to reveal his exasperation. Jesus' answer to their question, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's," produces a stunned amazement and silence on the part of his interrogators.

With this note of surprised unbelief on the part of the Pharisees, they disappear from the Markan narrative. Their opposition to Jesus is unsuccessful. After plotting his death in 3:6, seeking to condemn him on religious issues in 7:1-5 and 10:2-9, and finally trying to trap him in an impossible political dilemma, they fade from the scene. Jesus' death, which they hoped to bring about, will be accomplished by men whom Mark does not designate as Pharisees.

One group which helps to carry out Jesus' execution is the scribes; and, since twice in Mark scribes are identified with Pharisees (2:13-17; 7:1-5), it is beneficial to examine briefly their portrait in the Gosepl. Scribes are actually mentioned with greater frequency in the Gosepl than are the Pharisees, largely because of their presence in the technical expression referring to the Sanhedrin "elders, chief priests

and scribes," or "chief priests and scribes."⁴⁸ They primarily occur in the narrative in opposition to Jesus,⁴⁹ and in 12:38-40 Jesus sternly warns the crowd to beware of the hypocrisy of the scribes. However, in 1:22 and 9:11 they are mentioned in a neutral manner, and in 12:28-34 a scribe actually receives a favorable description and a commendation from Jesus.

Scribes play a predominantly negative role in the Gospel, giving Jesus at least as much opposition as the Pharisees. Nevertheless scribes receive one positive and two neutral mentions in Mark, while the Pharisees never receive a commendation. In Mark the Pharisees are always opposed to Jesus though their opposition is no more intense than that of the scribes. One might therefore conjecture that the positive statement given on the scribe in 12:28-34 could have been written as easily about a Pharisee. It does not appear that Mark was unaware of good things to say about members of Jewish religious groups which were generally opposed to Jesus. Such information simply did not receive priority in his selection of tradition to be used in his Gospel. Mark's main concern was to explain the Gospel about Jesus Christ (1:1), not to explain how various religious groups had both good and bad representatives, some antagonistic to Jesus and others sympathetic to him.⁵⁰ The role of scribes and Pharisees in Mark is primarily one of opposition, and therefore they are generally pictured as evil.

⁴⁸E.g., 8:31; 10:33; 11:18, 27; 14:43, 53-55; 15:1, 31.

⁴⁹Mk. 2:6-7, 13-17; 3:22; 7:1-5; 9:14-16; 11:18, 27-33; 14:43 ff., 53 ff.; 15:1 ff., 31 f.

⁵⁰Note that Mark does not even mention the Essenes or Zealots.

Conclusions

Mark's literary creation has as its central thrust the movement toward Jesus' passion. Units of tradition were selected and ordered to conform to this main thrust, and opposition from Jewish leaders functions as the dominant factor leading toward the passion. In Mark's brief account of the Gospel, no concern was given to the presentation of a balanced picture of Jesus' enemies. Such material would only detract from the clear movement of opposition leading to Jesus' death.

As part of the opposition, the Pharisees' role in the Gospel is negative by definition. Mentioned only in situations where they are in conflict with Jesus, nothing good is ever said about them. Mark portrays them as constantly seeking ways to destroy Jesus, and their main avenue of criticism concerning his behavior comes from their oral tradition. Since oral law provides their primary reasons for attack it is interesting to note how clearly Mark points out its deficiencies in 7:1 ff. From Mark's point of view, that which is used against Jesus is in itself a source of impious conduct and conducive to hypocrisy. The Pharisees are shown to be wrong theologically, and their life-styles are shown to deviate from the expressed will of God in Scripture.

Although Mark seems to have made no special attempt to defame the Pharisees⁵¹ (they are merely one of several opposing groups), the picture of them is polemical and negative in nature. This does not mean that the information given about Pharisaic behavior is incorrect, but it does mean that the Gospel gives a limited and one-sided view. Within the literary framework of the Gospel of Mark, the Pharisees are

⁵¹Mark does, however, appear to have been disgusted with the Pharisees' oral law (see esp. 7:3-4).

thoroughly evil. Hypocritical due to their radical commitment to oral tradition, they embody the restrictive, exclusive form of external piety that stands in direct opposition to the true righteousness revealed by the Messiah.

CHAPTER IV

THE PHARISEES ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

One of the major themes in the Gospel of Matthew is the presentation of Jesus as the authoritative teacher of the Law. Not only does this theme occur with great frequency, but the very structure of the Gospel reveals the seriousness with which it is pursued. When compared to Mark, which is predominantly narrative in form and contains few discourses of Jesus, Matthew is strikingly different. Devoting a great amount of space to the teaching of Jesus, Matthew exhibits a major concern to record his words. This is most clearly seen in the gathering together of tradition into large discourse sections such as the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5-7).¹ Furthermore, Matthew's redaction of Mark reveals a tendency to reduce the descriptive elements of the narrative and expand Jesus' teaching. At times the story elements are reduced to a mere question posed to Jesus, followed by his lengthy reply (cf. Mk. 9:33-50 and Mt. 18:1-9). Matthew's emphasis on the words of Jesus, especially his collection and arrangement of major blocks of discourse material, provides one of the primary avenues by which one can understand the literary structure of the Gospel.

¹Although much of the same material in Mt. 5-7 is contained in Luke, it is located in a much broader area in that Gospel.

Careful observation of Matthean structure reveals an alternating sequence of six narrative and five discourse sections with the following arrangement:

First Narrative (1-4)	First Discourse (5-7)
Second Narrative (8-9)	Second Discourse (10)
Third Narrative (11-12)	Third Discourse (13:1-52)
Fourth Narrative (13:53-17:27)	Fourth Discourse (18)
Fifth Narrative (19-22)	Fifth Discourse (23-25)
Sixth Narrative (26-28)	

However, the distinctions between narrative and discourse sections are sometimes rather minimal. There is a tendency to focus on Jesus' teaching even in the narrative sections, and some contain substantial discourses. For example, the fifth narrative has three lengthy parables (20:1-16; 21:33-46; 22:1-14). Conversely, two discourse sections contain limited narrative elements (13:10, 36; 18:1,21). Nevertheless, the alternating narrative-discourse arrangement of Matthew clearly reveals a deliberate structuring of tradition to conform to this pattern.

The works of B. W. Bacon have been extremely influential in convincing a great number of scholars that the Gospel of Matthew was intentionally written in an alternating narrative-discourse format.² Bacon maintained that the author of Matthew was a converted rabbi who wrote the Gospel in imitation of the five books of the Pentateuch, with five major divisions, each represented by a narrative section followed by a discourse. Since Bacon's Pentateuchal scheme left no room for the Birth

²B. W. Bacon, "The 'Five Books' of Matthew against the Jews," *The Expositor* 15 (1918): pp. 55-66; and *Studies in Matthew* (London: Constable, 1930). Bacon believed the recurring phrase "and when Jesus had finished" marked the division points between the books of Matthew (7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1).

Narrative (Mt. 1-2) and the Passion Narrative (Mt. 26-28), he relegated this material to "Prologue" and "Epilogue."³ Although scholars have pointed out many problems with Bacon's theory on the Gospel's structure and purpose,⁴ his work continues to exert considerable influence on contemporary Matthean scholarship.⁵ The ongoing quest for the correct view of the structure of Matthew still focuses largely on the narrative-discourse format of the Gospel.

³B. W. Bacon, Studies, op. cit., pp. 29, 40-41, 47, 81-82, 265-335.

⁴J. D. Kingsbury, Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), pp. 3-7, points out the following problems with Bacon's theory: (1) Matthew contains a clear concept of history, and to relegate the Birth Narrative and the Passion Narrative to prologue and epilogue is inappropriate; (2) there are not five great discourses in Matthew. The major break between Mt. 23 and 24-25 produces at least six discourses in the Gospel; (3) there is no corresponding structural division in the Pentateuch between narrative and legal materials as is postulated for the five books in Matthew, so the Gospel was not patterned after the structure of the Pentateuch.

See also W. D. Davies, The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount (Cambridge: University Press, 1964), pp. 25-93. Davies comments, "The fivefold structure cannot certainly be held to have any theological significance, that is, it does not necessarily point to a deliberate interpretation of the Gospel in terms of a new Pentateuch as, in its totality, a counterpart to the five books of Moses" (p. 107).

⁵Numerous scholars basically follow Bacon's outline of Matthean structure, although they may disagree with his Pentateuchal hypothesis. E.g., G. D. Kilpatrick, The Origins of the Gospel According to St. Matthew (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946), pp. 107-108, 135-36; K. Stendahl, The School of St. Matthew (reprinted; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), pp. 21-22, 24-27; D. Hill, The Gospel of Matthew (New Century Bible; London: Oliphants, 1972), pp. 44-48.

Others have proposed alternative views on Matthean structure. E.g., J. D. Kingsbury, op. cit., pp. 7-37, divides the Gospel into three sections based on the twice-used phrase "From that time on Jesus began" (4:17; 16:21). Although Kingsbury's work is carefully executed, he provides no adequate explanation of the presence of the large discourse sections or the alternating narrative-discourse arrangement.

Recently D. L. Barr published a short and insightful article in which he has sought to understand how Matthew's discourse sections unite the contents of the book, not how they divide them.⁶ Barr notes that the discourses contain elements pertaining to the narratives which both precede and follow them and serve to "interpret the previous narrative and prepare for the next."⁷ His unifying approach is so cogent that a brief review of his observations will be helpful.

According to Barr, Mt. 1-4 portrays Jesus as the fulfillment of the history of Israel, the Messiah, who ushers in the new age, "an age strikingly continuous with the past."⁸ The first discourse (Mt. 5-7) interprets the first narrative by defining the righteousness which Jesus insisted on seeing fulfilled (3:15; cf. 7:20) and presents Jesus as the authoritative source of this righteousness (e.g., 5:21 ff.). The second narrative section demonstrates Jesus' authority and shows that not everyone will accept his messianic ministry. Discourse number two (Mt. 10) discloses that the disciples' ministry is continuous with that of John the Baptist and Jesus, and reaches forward to preview their coming persecution. This predicted persecution is given graphic portrayal in the imprisonment of John the Baptist in the third narrative (Mt. 11-12). After Jesus says, "Blessed is he who takes no offense at me" (11:16), the Pharisees are pictured as becoming so offended at him that they plot his death (12:14). The third discourse (13:1-52) connects the Pharisees' hostility toward Jesus with similar hostility in the fourth narrative

⁶D. L. Barr, "The Drama of Matthew's Gospel: A Reconsideration of Its Structure and Purpose," Theology Digest 24 (1976): pp. 349-59.

⁷Ibid., p. 353.

⁸Ibid., p. 352.

and explains how the same messianic message can produce such diverse results in various people.⁹ In the fourth narrative the disciples grow in understanding while the Pharisees and scribes grow in hostility, and the question of the Gentiles is raised (13:53; 17:27). Church discipline is the major topic in the fourth discourse (Mt. 18), with the power to bind and loose in 18:18 connecting this section to 16:19 and the theme of greatness in the Kingdom (18:3 ff.) connecting it to the next section (e.g., 19:13-15). The fifth narrative (Mt. 19-22) culminates the opposition begun in the second narrative, with the Pharisees functioning as representatives of Israel, rejecting the Kingdom of Heaven, and with Jesus pronouncing that the Kingdom will be "given to a nation producing the fruit of it" (21:43). The last discourse (Mt. 23-25) "gathers together the preceeding condemnation of the Pharisees (Mt. 23) and then proleptically delineates the coming passion of the follwers of Jesus in the time before the final judgment."¹⁰ In so doing, the discourse prepares for the Passion Narrative, which in its conclusion brings the story full circle with Jesus' proclamation of his authority and eternal presence.

Barr's approach is extremely productive because it provides a unified view of Matthew's thematic developments within the structure of the alternating narrative-discourse framework. In the present attempt to understand Matthew's literary use of the Pharisees in his Gospel, Barr's unifying approach is so meritorious that it has been adopted as the literary structure withing which this study will proceed. Each narrative and discourse will be analyzed to determine the role of the Pharisees in Matthew's presentation of Jesus the Messiah, the authoritative interpreter of the Law.

⁹Ibid., p. 353.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 356.

In the first narrative, the Pharisees appear without an introductory explanation of their identity, as in the Gospel of Mark. Unlike Mark, however, who reveals the evil of the Pharisees in a dramatic way over the span of three conflict stories (Mk. 2:13-3:6), the initial descriptive statement of the Pharisees in Matthew is that they are a "brood of vipers" (3:7). The context is the prophetic ministry of John the Baptist; and, oddly enough, the Pharisees are grouped with the Sadducees.¹¹

Determination of their motivation for coming to where John was baptizing is difficult, for it is unclear whether they came as observers or participants. The parallel passage in Lk. 3:7 records that crowds were coming to John to be baptized (βαπτισθῆναι), but Mt. 3:7 merely reports that the Pharisees were coming to John's baptism (ἐπὶ τὸ βάπτισμα αὐτοῦ).¹² Regardless of whether they came to inspect John or to submit to his baptism, he singles them out for special condemnation.¹³ Though no previous indication is given that John was heatedly condemning those who came to him for baptism, with the arrival of the Pharisees and Sadducees he bursts into a heated proclamation of judgment.

¹¹ Pharisees and Sadducees differed greatly in their doctrinal beliefs. The oral tradition accepted as authoritative by the Pharisees (Jos. Ant. XIII. 297) was rejected by the Sadducees (Ant. XVIII. 16). Sadducees also rejected Pharisaic belief in the resurrection of the dead, judgment after death, and the existence of angels and spirits (Ant. XVIII. 16; War II. 165; Mk. 12:18-27; Acts 4:1-2; 23:6-9). Acts 4:1 associates the Sadducees with priests and in Acts 5:17 they are identified as associates of the high priest. Josephus labels them as rude in conduct, few in number, and primarily identified with the wealthy (Ant. XVIII. 16, 293; War II. 166). Occupying high positions of power (Ant. XVIII. 17), they were probably the dominant power in the Sanhedrin during Jesus' time (Acts 4:1; 5:17).

¹²A similar construction is used in 3:13 where Jesus comes to the Jordan (ἐπὶ τὸν Ἰορδάνην) to be baptized by John (βαπτισθῆναι).

¹³In Lk. 3:7 ff. a similar condemnation is directed by John to the whole crowd, not just the religious leaders.

The portrayal of the Pharisees given by John the Baptist is bleak. Comparing them to vipers, his imagery seems to reflect a description of snakes fleeing from a desert fire (3:7). His fiery pronouncement of the coming eschatological wrath reveals that the Pharisees desperately need to repent of their present evil lifestyle and begin to produce the fruits of a life pleasing to God (3:8; cf. 7:15-23). If they refuse to repent, they will be cut down and burned like worthless trees (3:10). Recognizing in the Pharisees a complacent trust in their Jewish heritage, John declares to them that their claim to be the sons of Abraham is worthless. David Hill observes that, "according to Jewish teaching, the merits of Abraham were counted to Israel's advantage: 'it is by the merits of Abraham their father that I walked up the sea for them' (Mek. Exod. 14.15)."¹⁴ John dismisses any such false belief on the part of the Pharisees by asserting, "God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham" (3:9).¹⁵

Thus, Matthew's initial picture of the Pharisees exposes them as wicked and in need of repentance and points out their unwarranted complacency in light of the imminent judgment. No explanation is given as to why they are regarded as evil at this first exposure, although that information will be progressively disclosed as the Gospel story progresses. Nor does John say that the Pharisees are beyond hope, although he warns of the serious nature of their condition. If they do not repent they will experience the wrath of the Messiah, who is coming in fiery

¹⁴D. Hill, op. cit., p. 93.

¹⁵A. H. McNeile, The Gospel According to Matthew (London: Macmillan, 1915), p. 27, observes a possible original word play with the Aramaic words for "sons" (ܐܒܝܬ) and "stones" (ܐܝܬܐ).

judgment to destroy those whose lives are not prepared for his appearing (3:11-12). This initial portrait of the Pharisees is prophetic. Throughout the Gospel they remain as they are described in this first encounter, refusing to repent when Jesus the Messiah repeats to them the same warning of destruction as the one given here by John the Baptist.

Apart from this first presentation of the Pharisees, Matthew concerns himself only with their dealings with Jesus. That Jesus is the authoritative interpreter of the Law is a major theme in the Gospel. Consequently, the encounters between Jesus and the Pharisees focus the issue on which of them truly understands and correctly interprets the Law. Such a question was of utmost importance for Matthew, for he wrote in a Jewish cultural milieu.¹⁶ The Law was so central for the Jews that they could imagine neither past, present, nor future without it. Rabbis believed the Torah was pre-existent "and instrumental in the creation of the world. . . . As the ground plan of the universe it could not but be perfect and unchangeable. . . . no prophet could ever arise who would change it, and no new Moses should ever appear to introduce another Law to replace it."¹⁷

¹⁶The Jewish nature of the Gospel may be seen in a number of ways. E.g., Matthew contains numerous Old Testament quotations and allusions, most of which reveal how the Messiah fulfills the Old Testament prophecies. [For a complete study, see R. H. Gundry, The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967).] The Sermon on the Mount, especially 6:1-18, dealing with the cornerstones of Jewish piety (almsgiving, prayer, and fasting), reflects a Jewish setting. Matthew does not explain Jewish customs for his readers (cf. Mt. 15:1-2, 5, and Mk. 7:1-5, 11; see also Mt. 5:22, 23:5, 27; 27:6), and is fond of using Jewish circumlocutions (e.g., "Kingdom of Heaven" is used 33 times as compared to only four uses of "Kingdom of God").

¹⁷W. D. Davies, op. cit., pp. 157-58. Davies points out that this was true even in Hellenistic Judaism (Philo, Vita Mosis II, 3 §§14-16).

In the first narrative section, Matthew presents Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah,¹⁸ so naturally his Jewish readers would wonder what Jesus' view was of the Torah. Communicating the Gospel in his first-century cultural environment, Matthew would be aware of the Messianic expectations of the various expressions of Judaism. In light of the limited evidence of such expectations available in intertestamental documents, Matthew's presentation of Jesus as the authoritative interpreter of the Law is very important for understanding his literary use of the Pharisees.

Pre-Christian Pharisaic Messianic expectations are clearly presented in PssSol 17:23ff. The Messiah, the son of David, will be established by God as King over Israel (v. 23), as well as over the heathen nations (vv. 27, 31ff.). He will be taught by God (vv. 35, 42), and his rule will be characterized by great wisdom and righteousness (v. 31).¹⁹ Yet there is no indication that the Messiah will bring a new Law.

However, there was in first-century Judaism the realization that a new interpretation of the Law was needed to clarify unresolved questions. For example, I Macc. 4:41-46 indicates an expectation of a prophet who would come to interpret correctly the Law and to resolve "certain difficulties which beset the interpretation on the Law in the present."²⁰

¹⁸Jesus is the descendent of Abraham and David (1:1-17), proclaimed by the angel of the Lord to be Immanuel, "God with us" (1:23), born king of the Jews (2:20), ruler and shepherd of Israel (2:6), whose eschatological ministry was proclaimed by John the Baptist (3:1-12). In order to "fulfill all righteousness" he was baptized by John (3:15-16). Following his baptism the Holy Spirit descended on him and God announced him to be his beloved Son (3:16-17)

¹⁹A similar concept may be seen in I Enoch 48:1, 49:1; 51:3.

²⁰W. D. Davies, op. cit., p. 143. This prophet is not identified with the Messiah (cf. I Macc. 14:25-29).

Although the Qumran community followed the Manual of Discipline, they expected two Messiahs to arise, one from Aaron and the other from Israel, along with an eschatological prophet who would provide a new understanding of the Law. Feeling strongly the tension of living under the Law, they viewed the Manual of Discipline as an interim program which would be revised. This new interpretation of the Law was to be a mark of the Messianic Age, although the Messiahs would not be responsible for it. In the New Age the Law would be studied better, interpreted more exactly, observed more fully, and revered even by the Gentiles.²¹

Rabbinic literature also reveals an expectation of a more complete understanding of the Torah in the New Age. Many of the laws seemed very obscure to the rabbis, yet the normative belief was that one should simply obey a statute because it was commanded.²² In the New Age God would disclose the reasons for his commandments,²³ yet only limited modifications of the Law would be made. For example, some believed there would be no sin in the New Age, thus making many sacrifices unnecessary.²⁴ There is no indication, however, that the rabbis expected a new Torah.²⁵

It is, therefore, very important that Matthew presents Jesus as the one who brings a new and authoritative interpretation of the Law, not

²¹Ibid., pp. 147-49, 155-56 (1QS iv. 18-26; ix. 9-11; CD vi. 14).

²²Ibid., p. 171 (Numbers Rabbah xix. 8 on xix. 2).

²³Ibid., p. 172 (Numbers Rabbah xix. 6 on xix. 2).

²⁴Ibid., p. 161 (Lev. Rabbah ix. 7). Davies adds that Yalqut on Prov. 9:2 says that all festivals except Purim and the Day of Atonement will cease (p. 162).

²⁵Ibid., pp. 173-80. Davies analyzes and dismisses as invalid the several rabbinic references sometimes cited as evidence that a new Law was expected.

as one who brings a new Law. Nowhere does Matthew use terms like "new teaching" (as in Mk. 1:27) or "new Law of the Messiah." In his life and in his teaching Jesus is presented as the one who has fulfilled the Law's demands for righteousness (cf. 3:15).²⁶

Early in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus affirms the abiding validity of the Law (5:17-19) and proceeds to label as false much of the teaching people have heard from their religious leaders, pronouncing authoritatively that his teaching represents the true will of God (5:21-47). Precisely at the transition point between his affirmation of the Law and his rejection of contemporary expositions of it, Jesus evaluates the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees (5:20). As highly respected teachers of their day, these religious leaders were examples of righteous living to many.²⁷ Nevertheless, Jesus asserts that their righteousness is insufficient to gain entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven, an evaluation consistent with that of John the Baptist in 3:7ff. They are not used as examples of evil but as examples of insufficient righteousness.

Through the remainder of Mt. 5-7, Jesus alludes to Jewish religious teachers who teach incorrectly (5:21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43), supposedly-religious people who are hypocrites (6:2, 5, 16), etc. Although one may well conjecture that he has in mind the scribes and Pharisees, this identification is not concrete, for the charges are directed toward anonymous people. There is, however, a specific comparison between Jesus and the scribes at the end of the discourse; and this comparison expresses succinctly the major Matthean theme of Jesus as the authoritative

²⁶Ibid., pp. 95-96, 188-90.

²⁷See pp. 41-42 above for more detailed information on the scribes.

interpreter and teacher of the Law: "And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who has authority, and not as their scribes" (7:28-29). In Jesus' teaching, the long-awaited messianic interpretation of the Torah had at last become a reality.

In the second narrative, following the new interpretation of the Law in Mt. 5-7, Matthew reveals the power of Jesus to perform great miracles (Mt. 8-9). In the context of faith and discipleship²⁸ Matthew records the reaction of various people to Jesus' command to follow him. Some accept his authority and follow him, but others either reject him or question his actions (8:34; 9:3, 14, 24). Among those who reject him are the Pharisees; but, unlike the others, they do not stop at mere rejection but begin to oppose and condemn Jesus' ministry.

Jesus' first encounter with the Pharisees in the second narrative occurs in 9:9-13. The parallel passage, Mk. 2:13-17,²⁹ designates Jesus' opponents as "scribes of the Pharisees," but Mt. 9:11 limits this designation to "Pharisees." Although this change is relatively inconsequential, Matthew's other redactional work on this pericope redirects the impact of the story. The ironic reply of Jesus to the Pharisees' question in Mk. 2:17 focuses the issue on their ignorance of their own spiritual sickness. However, Matthew's addition of v. 13, which begins with the typical rabbinic formula "Go and learn what this means," focuses the issue on the Pharisees' ignorance of Scripture. If they understood

²⁸For a full treatment of Matthew's theme of discipleship in his telling of the miracle stories, see G. Bornkamm, G. Barth, and H. J. Held, Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew, trans. P. Scott (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), pp. 52-57; 165-299.

²⁹See pp. 41-43 above.

Scripture, they would understand Jesus' actions. Citing Hos. 6:6, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice," Jesus asserts that his behavior is correct because it fulfills Scripture. Though the reference to the Pharisees' righteousness in v. 13 may be ironic, as in Mk. 2:17, that is not the major point. The emphasis is that Jesus understands and fulfills Scripture, while the Pharisees do neither.

The next reference to the Pharisees comes in 9:14-17. Matthean redaction of this passage is minimal, and the issues raised are virtually identical to the parallel passage, Mk. 2:18-22.³⁰ However, the next mention of the Pharisees (9:32-34), albeit short, is prophetic of future events. The passage is very similar to 12:22-24, with the Pharisees exhibiting a hardened attitude toward Jesus, quite unprovoked by his actions. While the crowd marvels over Jesus' exorcism of a demon which had rendered a man unable to speak, the Pharisees attribute the action to the power of the "prince of demons" (v. 34). No reply is given to this accusation. It merely stands as a shocking and unjust reaction to a series of four wonderful miracles on the part of Jesus. The general populace acknowledges that, "Never was anything like this seen in Israel" (v. 33), but the Pharisees reveal a hardened antagonism which is expressed in their slander.³¹

³⁰See pp. 43-44 above. Matthew changes the anonymous "people" of Mk. 2:18 to the more specific "disciples of John" (9:14).

³¹Commentators are divided over the authenticity of Mt. 9:34. Those who reject it do so primarily on the basis of its similarity to 12:24, for the textual evidence for its inclusion is strong. Commenting on this verse, B. M. Metzger says, "The evidence for the shorter text is exclusively Western and relatively meager. Moreover, the passage seems to be needed to prepare the reader for 10:25. A majority of the (Editorial) Committee (of the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament) was impressed by the preponderant weight of the witnesses which include the verse," A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament (New York: United Bible Societies, 1971), pp. 25-26.

Pharisees do not play a major role in Mt. 8-9, but their opposition to Jesus does play a vital role in preparing for the violent Jewish opposition predicted in the second discourse (Mt. 10). Although no mention is made of specific Jewish groups in this discourse, vv. 14-39 are primarily concerned with the persecution of Jesus' disciples, especially by Jews (10:17,23). Jesus' reference to men calling him Beelzebul, in 10:25, effectively unites this passage with the two instances where Pharisees slander him in these terms (9:34; 12:24). So, although the Pharisees are not mentioned in the discourse, their actions in the second narrative prepare the reader for the violent antagonism of Mt. 10, as well as their own intensified opposition to Jesus in the third narrative section (Mt. 11-12). Jesus, the authoritative teacher, predicts precisely the course of future events in Mt. 10, and the Pharisees' actions in Chapters 11-12 help to establish the accuracy of his words.

The theme of questioning and rejection is further developed in Mt. 11, and controversies with the Pharisees dominate Chapter 12. Ironically Mt. 11 ends with Jesus mercifully extending an invitation to weary and burdened people to come to him for rest (11:28-30), and Mt. 12 begins with the Pharisees being quite unmerciful toward Jesus and his disciples. This controversy story centers on the issue of illegal harvesting of grain on the Sabbath, and again Matthew's redaction of his Markan source (Mk. 2:23-28) modifies the focus of the story.³²

In Mt. 12:1 the significant addition of "his disciples were hungry" reveals that their action was in response to an acutely felt need.

³²See pp. 44-45 above for details on Mk. 2:23-28.

Matthew further adds, in vv. 5-7, a more detailed explanation of why the behavior of Jesus and his disciples is within the confines of the Law. Both of these additions appear to be intended to vindicate Jesus of the Pharisaic charge that his disciples acted illegally. Not only does Jesus assert that he is "guiltless" (vv. 5, 7) but also that the Pharisees' false accusation stems from their own ignorance of Scripture. Patterning his argument in vv. 5-6 after the commonly used rabbinic qal wahomer ("the light and the weighty"),³³ Jesus maintains that, since the temple priests profane the Sabbath by performing their priestly duties, yet are guiltless, how much more shall the Son of Man, whose person and mission are greater than the temple,³⁴ be guiltless when he performs his duties on the Sabbath. Increased impact is added to this argument by again quoting Hos. 6:6 (cf. Mt. 9:13) and indicating that if the Pharisees truly understood Scripture they "would not have condemned the guiltless" (v. 7).

Consequently, this pericope contrasts Jesus' understanding of and obedience to the Law with the Pharisees' ignorance of it. In order to establish this conclusion more completely, Matthew omits Jesus' statement in Mk. 2:27 "the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath," for this remark could indicate to some that Jesus dismissed a command of the Law. On the contrary, Jesus understands and fulfills the Law completely. Correctly understood, the Law reveals God's mercy (12:7) and desire to bring rest to the weary and burdened (11:28-30). It was

³³ D. Hill, op. cit., p. 211.

³⁴ Matthew uses the neuter μείζων instead of a masculine form. It is, therefore, difficult to determine whether Jesus is referring to himself, the Kingdom of Heaven as present in his ministry, or both.

not meant to be itself a source of weariness and burdens as the Pharisees had caused it to become.

The next conflict story deals with healing on the Sabbath (12:9-14), and again Matthew changes the tenor of the Markan parallel (Mk. 3:1-6) by significant redactional modifications.³⁵ First he provides a definite time sequence whereby Jesus enters "their" synagogue (cf. 10:17) shortly after his confrontation with the Pharisees (12:9). The narrative is structured so that it appears Jesus was walking toward the Synagogue when the Pharisees confronted him in 12:1-8. Second, Matthew eliminates the dramatic way Mark portrays the Pharisees, in which they silently watch Jesus to see if he will heal the man's withered hand on the Sabbath so that they can accuse him (Mk. 3:2). Restructuring the story to conform more to the format of rabbinic argumentation, Matthew has the Pharisees directly confront Jesus with the question, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" Third, Matthew adds the material in vv. 11-12, which, as in 12:5-6, is qal wahomer in form:³⁶ If you will save a sheep on the Sabbath, how much more should you desire to save a man! Fourth, Jesus' question posed to the Pharisees in Mk. 3:4, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good. . .?" becomes in Mt. 12:12 a pronouncement, "It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."

The purpose of this pericope is to show that Jesus has righteously fulfilled the Law by doing good on the Sabbath, but the Pharisees have broken the Law by plotting the murder of an innocent man on the Sabbath

³⁵See pp. 45-47 above for details on Mk. 3:1-6.

³⁶D. Hill, op. cit., p. 213. Hill cites several rabbinic texts which attest to the legality of rescuing an animal on the Sabbath (B. Shab. 128b; Bab. Metzia 32b). Such an action was, however, forbidden by the Qumran sectarians (CD xi. 13-14).

(vv. 13-14). Matthew's redactional work in this story intensifies the issues raised in 12:1-8. The Pharisees are totally closed to the fact that God "desires mercy, and not sacrifice" (12:7). They actually plan Jesus' murder because he shows mercy toward the man with a withered hand. This evil desire to kill God's chosen Messiah places them totally outside the will of God, a position which remains unchanged throughout the Gospel.

Between 12:9-14 and the next conflict story (12:22-37), Matthew positions a pericope which reveals how Jesus' merciful actions fulfill scriptural predictions. The Pharisees respond to Jesus' tender treatment of the downtrodden (vv. 20, 22) by slandering him in v. 23. Their slander appears to have been triggered by messianic speculation on the part of the crowd following Jesus' healing of the deaf and mute demoniac. While the people ask in astonishment, "Can this be the Son of David?" the Pharisees accuse Jesus of performing his miracles by the power of Beelzebul (vv. 23-24).³⁷ In response, Jesus delivers one of the most severe pronouncements of judgment in the Gospel.

The Matthean context of the confrontation with the Pharisees in 12:22-37 is quite different from its parallel in Mk. 3:22-30, and considerable detail has been added to the narrative. Matthew adds the specific incident of the blind and dumb demoniac (v. 22), as well as the crowd's astonished messianic speculation. In Mk. 3:22, an official delegation of scribes from Jerusalem³⁸ accuses Jesus of using demonic

³⁷Davidic Messianism appears to have been somewhat common in the first century. Mt. 22:42 attributes this belief to the Pharisees (cf. II Sam. 7:13ff.; PssSol 17:23). Note the similar response by the chief priests and scribes to messianic speculation in 21:15.

³⁸See p. 48, note 23 above.

power, but in Mt. 12:23 it is a group of Pharisees. This charge is so serious that four reasons are given why it is false. First, Jesus points out that, if he is employing demonic power, Satan is actually fighting against himself and causing his own kingdom to crumble, an obviously false notion (vv. 25-26). Second, he calls attention to the fact that some of the "sons"³⁹ of the Pharisees are also involved in exorcism (v. 27). This Matthean addition illuminates the unjust nature of the Pharisees' accusation of Jesus, for they would never use similar criteria for judging their own people as they do for judging Jesus. Their action is so obviously wrong that Jesus tells these men their own "sons" will pronounce judgment on their behavior. Third, he proclaims that his power for casting out demons comes from the Spirit of God and that this is proof that the Kingdom of God⁴⁰ has, in fact, come upon them (v. 28). This verse is also a Matthean addition, emphasizing that the long-awaited Kingdom of God has arrived in the person and work of Jesus; and, although the common people are aware of this (cf. 9:27; 12:23), the Pharisees, perhaps willfully, are blind to it. Fourth, Jesus uses the imagery of the binding of a strong man and the plundering of his goods to emphasize that he is, in fact, doing battle with and conquering the evil one (v. 29). Such imagery should have been familiar to first-century Jews, for it finds

³⁹There is no concensus among commentators on the meaning of "sons." A. Plummer, An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew (London: Paternoster, 1910), p. 177, says that "sons" should probably be taken literally. He cites Acts 19:13; Jos. Ant. VIII. ii. 5; and Tob. 8:1-3 as other examples of Jewish exorcists. E. Schweizer, The Good News According to St. Matthew, trans. D. E. Green (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), p. 286, states that the "sons" are "disciples of the Pharisees." A. H. McNeile, op. cit., p. 175, says "sons" means Jews in general.

⁴⁰In Matthew, "Kingdom of God" occurs only in 12:28; 19:24, 21:31, 43.

expression elsewhere in the belief that Satan would be bound in the last days (Ass. Moses 10:1; Test. Levi 18:1; Rev. 20:2).

From these four reasons Jesus draws four conclusions concerning the Pharisees, of which only the second is also found in the Gospel of Mark. First, they are working against him, seeking to stop his work of gathering people for the Kingdom of Heaven (12:30). Second, they have blasphemed the Holy Spirit of God and will never be forgiven, "either in this age or in the age to come" (vv. 31-32).⁴¹ Third, as a tree is known by its fruit, so they are known by their actions (v. 33). In order to clarify his meaning Jesus adopts the metaphor used by John the Baptist in 3:7ff., calling the Pharisees a "brood of vipers" and insisting that, because they are evil, they cannot avoid saying evil things (v. 34). As bad trees bring forth bad fruit, so these men spontaneously speak forth evil from their evil hearts (v. 34). In yet another metaphor, that of a man's treasure, Jesus compares the Pharisees to an evil man who brings forth evil things out of his evil treasure (v. 35). The threefold use of "evil" strongly emphasizes Jesus' evaluation of the Pharisees. Fourth, on the day of judgment, they will have to give an account for every careless word they have uttered and will be acquitted or condemned accordingly (vv. 36-37). The implication is that the careless and evil things they have said about Jesus will most certainly bring about their condemnation on the day of judgment.

⁴¹"Blasphemy is an expression of defiant hostility toward God. The scribes were thoroughly familiar with this concept under the rubric 'the profanation of the name,' which generally denoted speech which defies God's power and majesty. The scribal tradition considered blasphemy no less seriously than did Jesus. 'The Holy One, blessed by he, pardons everything else, but on the profanation of the Name (i.e. blasphemy) he takes vengeance immediately'. . . .By assigning the action of God to a demonic origin the scribes betray a perversion of spirit which, in defiance of the truth, chooses to call light darkness." W. L. Lane, The Gospel According to Mark (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), p. 145.

The emphasis in 12:22-37 is directed toward the Pharisees' evil speech. With their words they oppose Jesus' Spirit-empowered efforts to build the Kingdom of God, and by their words they will be condemned on the day of judgment. No longer does Jesus merely accuse them of being ignorant of Scripture. Now the indictment is made that their words reveal an implacable opposition to God himself. The Pharisees, who plotted Jesus' murder in 12:14, are exposed by Jesus in 12:33-37 as being wicked to the very core and incapable of saying anything good. Such an indictment implies that they should definitely not be heeded as teachers.

Matthew makes the last conflict story of this series (12:38-45) continuous with 12:22-37 by beginning the narrative with "Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him" [literal translation] (τότε ἀπεκρίθησαν αὐτῷ τινες τῶν γραμματέων καὶ Φαρισαίων). Thus the Pharisees' demand for a sign is shown to be in response to Jesus' condemnation of them in 12:25-37. Seeing Jesus cast out a demon did not make them believe, and hearing his warning of coming judgment did not cause them to repent. Their demand for a "sign" reveals that they will absolutely refuse to be convinced that Jesus is the Messiah unless they are forced to do so by the inescapable evidence of an eschatological sign from heaven (12:38; cf. 16:1; I Cor. 1:22).⁴² They are an "evil generation" (vv. 39, 45) which insists on resisting Jesus (cf. 11:16-19 where "this generation" calls Jesus a "glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners").

Jesus does not seek to show from Scripture that the Pharisees' demand for a sign is wrong, but he does give his answer in the form of a biblical allusion. Condemning these religious leaders as wicked and

⁴²For a discussion on the meaning of "sign" see pp. 55-56 above.

unfaithful to God ("adulterous" v. 39; cf Is. 57:3; Hos. 7:13-16), Jesus refuses to give a sign. Instead he says that only the "sign of Jonah" will be given to them. Although Jesus does not specify clearly the exact meaning of the "sign of Jonah," he connects it with his coming death.⁴³ Comparing his approaching three days and nights "in the heart of the earth" to Jonah's three days and nights in the belly of the fish, Jesus asserts that this is the only sign the Pharisees will be given (vv. 39-40).

Since no explanatory information is provided to illuminate the meaning of "three days and three nights in the heart of the earth," the Pharisees should legitimately be confused over the meaning of Jesus' statement. However, there is little room for misunderstanding in two examples which follow. In order to illustrate the Pharisees' wickedness, Jesus ironically uses two examples of Gentiles who responded to men of God and who will stand up at the last judgment to condemn the Pharisees. The men of Nineveh, who repented at the preaching of Jonah, will condemn these religious leaders who refuse to repent, though they heard Jesus the Messiah, whose person and preaching are far greater than Jonah and his preaching (v. 41). Similarly the Queen of the South (Queen of Sheba, I Kings 10:1-13) came a great distance to listen to the widely acclaimed wisdom of Solomon. Her great effort was expended to listen to a man whose wisdom was less than that of Jesus, yet the Pharisees refuse to learn from him (v. 42). This contrast between responsive Gentiles and unresponsive Jewish leaders⁴⁴ is designed to show that, although Jesus is greater

⁴³E. Schweizer, op. cit., p. 293, maintains that the sign of Jonah was "his preaching" on the basis of v. 41, but this view does not adequately account for the direct connection in v. 40 between Jonah's time in the fish and Jesus' time in the earth.

⁴⁴F. V. Filson, A Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), p. 152.

than the two men of God with whom Gentiles were impressed, the Jewish religious leaders fail to recognize him.⁴⁵ Probably intended to shame the Pharisees, this analysis of their spiritual blindness is further developed in the short parable of 12:43-45.

In 12:43-45 Jesus compares the Pharisees to a man out of whom an evil spirit goes and wanders through waterless places,⁴⁶ only to return again with seven other spirits more wicked than itself. Though the meaning of this parable is difficult to determine, to which the diversity of opinions among commentators vividly attests, the application of it to the Pharisees is clear from v. 45. Repeating the designation "this evil generation," which was used of the Pharisees in the previous paragraph (12:39, 41, 42), Jesus reveals that the final condition of these men will be worse than the first. Their wickedness is magnified by the fact that they have heard the Messiah teach and witnessed his miracles, only to attribute his power and ministry to Satan. Such evil is far beyond whatever wicked actions they previously performed. Appropriately, these men who refuse to listen to God's "Son" will be condemned by Gentiles who listened to God's "messengers."

The third discourse (13:1-52) occurs on the same day as the conflict series between Jesus and the Pharisees in 12:22-45.⁴⁷ Although Jesus refers to the crowd in general as those whom Isaiah said would "hear but never understand" (v. 14), no mention is made of the Pharisees.

⁴⁵T. H. Robinson, The Gospel of Matthew (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1928), p. 115.

⁴⁶Deserts were considered the special haunts of demons (e.g., Tobit 8:3).

⁴⁷Mt. 12:46-50 is plotted on the same day as 12:22-45 (v. 46 "While he was still speaking") and 13:1 begins with "That same day Jesus. . . ."

More people than the scribes and Pharisees are "calloused" to hearing the word of God (v. 15). This fact is vividly portrayed in the initial story of the fourth narrative, in which those in Jesus' home town refuse to believe in him in spite of the fact that they recognize his "wisdom" and "mighty works" (13:53-58).

Pharisees are first mentioned in the fourth narrative in 15:1-20, in a conflict story centering on the issue of ritual defilement. Interestingly, this pericope immediately follows a brief account in which Jesus is touched by a number of sick people in the marketplace (14:34-36), a situation the Pharisees would consider ritually defiling.⁴⁸ Matthew's redaction of the Markan parallel, Mk. 7:1ff.,⁴⁹ is rather extensive, as the following seven examples clearly confirm:

1. In Mark, some (local) Pharisees accompany a group of scribes from Jerusalem to help interrogate Jesus. Matthew 15:1 designates both the Pharisees and the scribes as being from Jerusalem, thus introducing the element of official Pharisaic opposition to Jesus from Jerusalem. This may well serve as an introduction to the intense conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees in Jerusalem in the fifth narrative.
2. Matthew omits the Markan editorial additions (Mk. 7:3-4, 19b). The omission of Mk. 7:3-4, an explanation of Jewish customs, most likely reflects the Jewish nature of Matthew's readers, for whom such an explanation would not be necessary. However the omission of Mk. 7:19b, "Thus he declared all foods clean," reveals a different literary purpose than that of Mark. Matthew evidently did not desire

⁴⁸D. Hill, op. cit., p. 249.

⁴⁹For an analysis of Mk. 7:1ff., see pp. 47-52 above.

to indicate that Jesus dismissed Jewish food laws. Further evidence for this may be seen in v. 20, where Matthew adds, "to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man." In so doing, he returns the argument to the original question of v. 2 (i.e., tradition) and makes 15:1-20 a unit. "By adding this clause Matthew shows his intention to keep the application of Jesus' word to the tradition of the elders, and does not infer from it the abolition of the Mosaic food-laws."⁵⁰

3. Matthew radically rearranges the sequence of Jesus' reply to the Pharisaic accusation. In Mk. 7:6ff. Jesus begins by calling them hypocrites and quoting Isaiah. Then he uses Corban as an example of how they break the Law through adherence to their tradition. In Mt. 15:3ff. Jesus begins by asking why the Pharisees break God's law for the sake of their tradition, providing as an example the practice of Corban and concludes by calling them hypocrites and quoting Isaiah. The resulting Matthean structure of this pericope is very similar to the rabbinic argumentation format: a question, a counter-question raising an even more serious charge, and an answer.⁵¹ Such assimilation toward rabbinic style is similar to the changes made in Mt. 9:9-13; 12:1-8, 9-12.
4. The technical term Corban and its explanation (Mk. 7:11) are replaced in v. 5 with the simple "gift" (δῶρον), probably due to the familiarity of Matthew's Jewish audience with the custom.
5. While in Mk. 7:12-13 Jesus charges that the Pharisees actively prevent people from doing anything for their parents, in Mt. 15:5

⁵⁰D. Hill, op. cit., p. 252.

⁵¹E. Schweizer, op. cit., p. 326.

the charge is that they make it possible for a man to avoid honoring his parents. Matthew's use of "honor" in v. 5 assimilates Jesus' statement more closely to the scriptural citation of Ex. 20:12 in v. 4. The overall result of these modifications is a change of the domineering prevention of Mk. 7:12 to a theological manipulation in order to circumvent the Law in Mt. 15:5.

6. Jesus' accusation in Mk. 7:13, "And many such things you do," is omitted by Matthew, who focuses the issue entirely on the problem of Corban.
7. In 15:12-14 Matthew adds an anti-Pharisaic statement in which the term "scribes" is not used as in v. 1. In this addition Jesus explains to his disciples that the Pharisees are not plants which God has planted; and, therefore, they will be uprooted. The metaphor of God's chosen people as plants of God seems to be based on Is. 60:21 and was a very common figure of speech at Qumran.⁵² Various Jewish groups, including the Pharisees, considered themselves to be the true Israel,⁵³ exhibiting an acute election-consciousness. Jesus' rejection of the Pharisaic confidence in their own election is reminiscent of John the Baptist's statement in 3:7ff.; like John, he not only dismisses their election-confidence but also predicts their coming judgment by God. Ridiculing the Pharisees' belief in being enlightened guides of the people (v. 14), Jesus calls them

⁵²D. Hill, op. cit., p. 252 (1QS viii. 5; xi. 8; CD i. 7; cf. I Enoch 10:16; PssSol 14:2).

⁵³E. Schweizer, op. cit., p. 226 (PssSol 14:3-4; Jub. 1:16; 7:34; 1QS xi. 8; 1QH vi. 15-17; vii. 10, 18-19; viii. 4ff.; x. [25-26], 31).

blind guides who only lead people astray.⁵⁴ Far from teaching the true ways of God, the Pharisees pervert the clear command of God to honor one's parents through their oral tradition (vv. 3-6). Jesus concluding command to his disciples is unequivocal, "leave them" (ἀφετε αὐτούς).

The Matthean emphasis of this story, brought about by a thorough redaction of Mk. 7:1ff., is that the Pharisees are not to be trusted as teachers. To follow their teaching will lead to transgression of the Law, for their tradition invalidates a clear scriptural command (vv. 3-6). They are hypocrites, acting as if they are qualified to be the spiritual leaders of Israel, while, in fact, they do not even belong to God (v. 13). Blind and misguided, the Pharisees are not to be followed. Those who would belong to the Kingdom of Heaven must reject the teaching of the Pharisees and follow Jesus, the one who truly knows the will of God.

In Jesus' next encounter with the Pharisees, they come "to test him" by asking for a "sign from heaven" (16:1).⁵⁵ This pericope follows the miraculous feeding of the 4,000 and the healing of the lame, blind, crippled, dumb, etc., who were brought to him. The people's response to Jesus' great miracles is to praise the God of Israel (15:31). However, when the Pharisees approach Jesus shortly thereafter, they exhibit no corresponding enthusiasm. Working together with the Sadducees,⁵⁶ the

⁵⁴Devout Jews believed that they were able to be guides for the Gentiles who were in darkness because they did not have the Law (cf. Rom. 2:19-20).

⁵⁵For a discussion of the meaning of "sign from heaven" see pp. 55-56 above.

⁵⁶Twice in Matthew (3:7-12; 16:1-12) the Pharisees and Sadducees are mentioned together. Although 3:7-12 does not specify that they were working together, in 16:1-12 they appear to be acting in concert. It is not clear why Matthew added "Sadducees" to the story (Mk. 8:11 has only

Pharisees seek to discredit Jesus. Due to the addition of 16:2-3, 11-12, Matthew's version of this story is longer than its Markan parallel (Mk. 8:11-21). This special material focuses the story upon the ignorance and false teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Jesus acknowledges the Pharisees' and Sadducees' ability to predict the weather by interpreting the appearance of the sky and contrasts this with their ignorance of how to interpret the signs of the times.⁵⁷ They are totally incompetent at understanding the obvious reality indicated by Jesus' ministry. If they see red sky in the evening they know it will be fair weather, yet after observing Jesus heal people and hearing him teach they are unable to recognize the clear indications that he has come as God's special messenger to introduce the Kingdom of Heaven (cf. 12:28). While many of the common people understand that Jesus is the "Son of David" (9:27; 15:22) the religious leaders are ignorant of this fact. Consequently, Jesus labels them as "an evil and adulterous generation" and reasserts that the only sign they will receive is that of the prophet

"Pharisees"), especially since the very similar Mt. 12:38ff. pericope has "scribes and Pharisees." Possibly the Markan emphasis on the "leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod" (Mk. 8:15) was not suitable for Matthew's emphasis on false teaching, because Herod was not a teacher. Therefore, Matthew would not want to use "Herod" in 16:6 because of the condemnation of "teaching" in 16:12. Possibly Matthew wanted to retain the warning against the two groups of Mk. 8:15 in his similar warning in 16:6, so he changed "Herod" to "Sadducees" and for consistency in the narrative also added "Sadducees" in 16:1. Why he chose the Sadducees instead of "scribes" is difficult to understand, unless he desired to emphasize their hypocrisy. The religious leaders were so united in their mutual rejection of Jesus that opposing factions would actually join forces in order to try to discredit him. D. Hil, op. cit., p. 257, believes that "Pharisees and Sadducees" represents official Judaism in its entirety.

⁵⁷Although some important Mss do not contain Mt. 16:2b-3 (e.g., \mathcal{N} , B, \mathfrak{f}^{13} , 157), these Mss come from climates (e.g., Egypt) "where red sky in the morning does not announce rain," B. M. Metzger, op. cit., p. 41.

Jonah (v. 4; cf. 12:39).⁵⁸ Then, acting upon his own instruction to his disciples in 15:14, Jesus "left them" (v. 4).

Following the controversy over the sign from heaven, Jesus takes advantage of the disciples' failure to bring along any bread to warn them against the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees (16:5-12). This account is very similar to its parallel in Mk. 8:14-21, but several Matthean alternations change the thrust of the passage. The exchange of "Sadducees" for "Herod" has already been noted, and it could be added that Matthew focuses on the disciples as "men of little faith" (v. 8) instead of men having hardened hearts, as in Mk. 8:17-18. However the major difference concerning the Pharisees comes in the addition of vv. 11-12. Here the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees is explicitly defined as their false teaching,⁵⁹ quite unlike the Markan passage, where leaven refers to hypocrisy. The main concern in Matthew is to show that these religious leaders are false teachers and that people should "beware" of their teaching.

Pharisees are not mentioned again in the fourth narrative, nor do they appear in the fourth discourse (Mt. 18). However, some of the material in Mt. 18 forms significant background information for the Matthean portrait of the Pharisees. By juxtaposing the unconcerned attitude of the Pharisees toward people and their deficient understanding of the mercy of God with the attitude of God toward people as revealed by Jesus in Mt. 18, it may be seen how far away from God they really are. God is presented as so desirous of people being part of his kingdom that

⁵⁸Mt. 16:4 and 12:39 are nearly identical, and the "sign of Jonah" in 16:4 is surely informed by the explanation of this sign in 12:39-40.

⁵⁹For "leaven" as symbolic of "evil" see p. 56, note 42, above.

he searches for them like a shepherd for a lost sheep (18:10-14) and exercises terrible judgment on those who cause people who would follow Jesus to go astray (v. 6).

Matthew 19:1 marks the beginning of Jesus' ministry in Judea, a time permeated with turmoil. After the initial confrontation with the Pharisees in 19:3-9, the narrative centers primarily on entry into and life within the Kingdom of Heaven in Chapters 19-20. In Mt. 21 Jesus' entry into Jerusalem is accompanied by great excitement from the common people, but from 21:12-22:46 the narrative is totally dominated by a series of conflicts with the religious leaders of Jerusalem. Of the ten conflict stories in the fifth narrative section, seven of them involve the Pharisees.

The first conflict with the Pharisees in this section occurs when they approach Jesus with a question about the legality of divorce (19:3-9). Matthean redaction of the parallel pericope (Mk. 13:1-12)⁶⁰ reveals an attempt to make the story conform more to a format of rabbinic argumentation, centering on the issue of the proper interpretation of the Law (cf. 15:1-20).⁶¹ For example, by adding the phrase "for any cause" in v. 3, the argument is brought into the "realm of strict legal discussion,"⁶² much like the debates between Shammai and Hillel. Also, Jesus' initial response, "Have you not read" (v. 4) is an addition which not only reflects rabbinic phraseology but also seems to function as an oblique accusation that the Pharisees are ignorant of Scripture. This

⁶⁰For information on Mk. 13:1-12, see p. 57 above.

⁶¹D. Hill, op. cit., p. 279, states that Jesus employs the rabbinic "the more original, the weightier" argument in Mt. 19:4-6.

⁶²Ibid.

accusation is amplified by Matthew's rearranging of the elements of the story, plus a reversal of two key terms in v. 7.

The difference in the sequence of events may be readily seen in the following comparison:

Mk. 13:2-12

Pharisees' question (v. 2)
 Jesus' counter-question (v. 3)
 Pharisees' answer (v. 4)
 Jesus' rebuttle and applica-
 tion (vv. 5-9)
 Jesus' private instructions
 to his disciples on divorce
 (vv. 11-12)

Mt. 19:3-12

Pharisees' question (v. 3)
 Jesus' answer (vv. 4-6)
 Pharisees' counter question (v. 7)
 Jesus' answer plus application
 (vv. 8-9)
 Jesus' private instructions
 to his disciples concerning
 celibacy (vv. 10-12)

Matthew's reordering of the story emphasizes the Pharisees' ignorance of Scripture, for their question concerning why Moses commanded divorce follows Jesus' explanation of God's intention for marriage. Their question could be paraphrased, "If God said in Gen. 1:27; 2:24 that the marriage bond should not be broken, why did Moses command in Dt. 24:1 that a man should divorce his wife?" It is at this point that a striking reversal of terms is used in the narrative. Speaking to their ignorance of scriptural harmony, Jesus replies that Moses allowed divorce because of hardness of heart (v. 8). Thus Matthew reverses the terminology of Mark, who records Jesus as asking, "What did Moses command you?" and the Pharisees as replying, "Moses allowed. . . ." (Mk. 10:3-4). In Matthew the impression is given that the Pharisees were confused over the apparent disharmony of Scripture, and Jesus corrected their mistaken notion that Moses commanded divorce by pointing out that he only allowed it.⁶³ Once again, therefore, Jesus is shown to be superior to the Pharisees in his

⁶³This is not to say that in Mk. 10:3-4 Jesus said that Moses commanded divorce. It merely shows that, in rearranging the story, Matthew found it convenient to switch the terms.

understanding of Scripture. He understands the will of God for marriage and they do not. Matthew's point is that Jesus does not destroy the Law; he radically deepens obedience to the will of God by giving his authoritative interpretation of the Law.

Following the debate in 19:3ff., there are no further controversy stories until Mt. 21, where conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders in Jerusalem dominates the narrative. Matthew 21:23-22:46 is carefully arranged and redacted to form a closely connected series of events occurring in rapid succession. In this section Matthew portrays Jesus' just contempt for the religious leaders in Jerusalem. Although the Pharisees play the dominant role in the conflict series, there are indications that Matthew was not concerned with precisely designating the exact role each religious group played. His major thrust is to reveal the united opposition to Jesus from the various factions and show how they have rejected his Messiahship. The parables of Jesus in 21:28-31, 33-44; 22:1-14 do not focus on individual traits of specific groups. Rather, they center on the rejection and murder of Jesus by the Jewish leaders and the resulting movement of the Kingdom of God toward other people who will accept Jesus and obey him.

The lack of concern with precisely designated roles in 21:23-22:14 is clearly seen in the change of opponents between 21:23 and 21:45. In 21:23-27 Jesus is confronted by "chief priests and elders," and the next two parables are structured so that Jesus continues to speak to the same group of men. Nevertheless, when he finishes his second parable, the narrative reports that the "chief priests and Pharisees" understood that the parables were against them (21:45). This exchange of "Pharisees" for

"elders" seems to reveal more of a thrust toward inclusiveness than specificity.

Since the narrative does not make careful distinctions between the various religious groups, it might be tempting for a historian to dismiss totally this information concerning the historical Pharisees. Yet Matthew's literary use of the Pharisees clearly assigns to them a major role in this section, which is, therefore, of extreme importance in understanding how Matthew employs the Pharisees in his Gospel as a whole.

It is the chief priests⁶⁴ and elders⁶⁵ who come to question Jesus' authority following his radical behavior in the temple on the previous

⁶⁴In the first century A.D. chief priests were distinct from the ordinary priests who lived in the surrounding country and came to Jerusalem when it was their division's turn to serve in the temple (see Jos. Ant. VII. 365; I Chron. 24; Lk. 1:5, 8 for information on the 24 divisions of priests and their duties). Chief priests held high positions in the temple cultus. The ruler of the temple had the highest rank next to the high priest (Acts 4:1; 5:24, 26; Jos. Ant. XX. 131; etc.). He was chosen from among the priestly aristocracy and he oversaw the cultus, the priesthood, and the temple guard. Chief priests also included those who oversaw the weekly and daily courses of ordinary priests. There were no less than seven temple proctors (Lk. 22:4, 52) and no less than three temple treasurers who controlled income and expenditure in the temple. Many of these offices were probably held by former high priests. In the Gospels "chief priests" refers to members of the Sanhedrin. J. Baehr, "ἱερεῖς" in The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, vol. III, ed. C. Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), pp. 34-35; and G. Schrenk, "ἀρχιερεῖς," in the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. III, ed. G. Kittel (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), pp. 270-271.

⁶⁵According to G. Bornkamm, although the council of elders at Jerusalem is known only from Seleucid times (Antiochus III, 223-187 B.C.), the beginnings "may be traced back to the Persian Period." In the beginning πρεσβύτερος was used for all the council members, but gradually it came to designate the lay members as distinct from the priestly families and the scribes as well. The elders came from wealthy patrician families in Jerusalem, and they usually followed the lead of the priestly Sadducees (Ant. XVIII. 17). They did not determine the direction of the Sanhedrin, and their position of lesser importance is reflected in the fact that their name generally occurs last in New Testament references to Sanhedrin members ("chief priests, scribes, and elders"). "πρόεδρος," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. VI, ed. G. Friedrich, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), pp. 658-59.

day (21:23). Matthew omits "scribes" (cf. Mk. 11:27); and, by changing the Markan description of Jesus "walking in the temple" to "he was teaching," frames the controversy in the setting of public teaching in the temple.⁶⁶ This questioning by these leaders of the temple leads to a lengthy expose of their wickedness.

By deferring their question on his authority through asking if they believed John's baptism was from heaven or from men (21:25), Jesus uses the common rabbinic ploy of answering a question with a question. Such argumentation was used as a means of leading to the correct answer or forcing the opponent to concede a point. In this case, Jesus connects the origin of his authority with the origin of John's baptism and forces the chief priests and elders to announce publically their opinion on the origin of John's baptism. If they cannot decide upon John's authority, they have no competence to decide upon the authority of Jesus. Unable to answer forthrightly, due to their fear of the people, these leaders plead ignorance (21:25-27). They are forced to proclaim publically their ignorance rather than have their disbelief in John's prophetic ministry exposed. Thus, they suffer the humiliation of an open declaration of their own incompetence as religious leaders. Such embarrassment only deepens their hostility toward Jesus, who, in the next pericope, publicly exposes them to ridicule.

⁶⁶ A. H. McNeile, op. cit., p. 304, believes Matthew's "teaching" is an interpretation of Mark's "walking," as though he pictured Jesus as walking along with his disciples following behind, instructing them in the fashion of peripatetic teachers. Due to the very Jewish nature of the Gospel and the emphasis on Jesus as the authoritative teacher of the Law, McNeile's interpretation seems out of character with Matthew's portrayal of Jesus.

Continuing to address the chief priests and elders,⁶⁷ Jesus tells a parable about two sons, one who said he would obey but did not, and one who said he would not obey but ended up doing what his father commanded (21:28ff.). Jesus asks the religious leaders which son was obedient; and, after they correctly respond, he makes it clear that they are like the son who said he would be obedient but did not follow through with his commitment.⁶⁸ Their profession of godliness is not matched by obedience to the will of God. Because of their refusal to repent and believe when they heard the preaching of John the Baptist, they are not following the way of righteousness and are not entering the Kingdom of God⁶⁹ (vv. 31-32). By contrast, the tax collectors and prostitutes, undoubtedly condemned as impious by the religious leaders, are entering the Kingdom of Heaven because they repented and believed. Far from being able to lead the common people in the ways of God, these leaders are not even responsive to God; and, as the next parable reveals, they are in absolute opposition to what God is seeking to accomplish on earth.

The opening phrase of 21:33-46, "Hear another parable," directs this story to the same audience as 21:28-32, in spite of the shift to "chief priests and Pharisees" in 21:45.⁷⁰ This parable is an allegory in which the landowner is God, the vineyard is Israel,⁷¹ the tenants are

⁶⁷No transition is used between the two stories, and the common reference to the rejection of John the Baptist by the religious leaders ties the two passages together into a sequence (21:25-26, 32).

⁶⁸Note the repetition of "repent" in vv. 29 and 32.

⁶⁹"Kingdom of God" is used only four times in Matthew (12:28; 19:24; 21:31, 43).

⁷⁰There is no parallel to Mt. 21:43-46 in Mark.

⁷¹Israel symbolized as a vineyard is common in the Old Testament (e.g., Is. 5:1-7; Jer. 2:21; Ezk. 15:1-6; 19:10-14; Hos. 10:1).

Jewish religious leaders, the servants are the prophets, and the landowner's son is Jesus. God has placed his people Israel under the supervision of religious leaders, but these men have not led the people into accomplishing his will (no fruit, vv. 33ff.; cf. 3:10).⁷² Consistently rejecting and abusing God's messengers, these evil leaders will finally kill God's Son.

After telling the parable, Jesus asks for a verdict from the chief priests and elders (Pharisees) concerning what action the landowner should take against his rebellious tenants. Ironically their answer predicts their own fate: "He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons" (21:41; cf. v. 31). Jesus' initial response to their verdict, "Have you never read in the scriptures" (v. 42), once again calls attention to the ignorance of his opponents. After this introductory remark, Jesus quotes Ps. 118:22-23, changing his imagery from vineyard tenants to builders but retaining the theme of rejection. Agreeing with the verdict pronounced in v. 41, he asserts that the Kingdom of Heaven has been taken away from these disobedient people and given to a nation (*ἔθνος*) which will perform the will of God. This new nation is most likely the church which is solidly established (16:18) and comprised of people from all nations who are obedient to the will of God as taught by Jesus (8:11-12; 21:31; 28:19-20).

It is important to recognize that in the parable of 21:33-39 the wicked tenants do not kill the owner's son in ignorance. They

⁷²Mt. 21:33 is a loose quote of Is. 5:2 (LXX). D. Hill, op. cit., p. 299, observes that Matthew adds in 21:35 a reference to "stoning," a penalty "meted out to (among others) soothsayers or persons with a familiar spirit" (M. San. vii. 4). The implication may be that the Jews have "condemned the genuine prophets, or servants, as false prophets."

clearly recognize the heir (v. 38) just as the religious leaders recognize in 21:15 that Jesus is doing "wonderful things." The evil of Jesus' opponents is magnified by the fact that they bitterly oppose him in spite of their realization that he is doing mighty acts by God's power. Their evil finds immediate expression in v. 45 after they understand that the parables were told against them. Instead of repenting and abandoning their wicked intentions, they become more committed to their intention to kill Jesus.

By informing the reader that Jesus' parable in 21:33-39 was told about the Pharisees, Matthew explicitly connects the Pharisees' with Jesus' death; this is something Mark fails to do. Although the Markan Pharisees do plot Jesus' death (Mk. 3:6), they are not mentioned in connection with his condemnation and crucifixion. Neither Gospel refers to the Pharisees explicitly within the Passion Narrative, but Mt. 21:33-46 implies that their guilt is equal to that of the Sanhedrin members who actually have Jesus murdered. Unlike the Markan Pharisees, who only plan Jesus' death, the Matthean Pharisees are implicated in his execution.

The third parable in this series (22:1-14), which has no parallel in Mark, is connected to the preceeding parables by the transferal of the Markan ending to the previous parable (Mk. 12:12b), "so they left him and went away," to the end of the taxation pericope (Mt. 22:22). Matthew constructs his narrative so that 22:1-14 is told on the same day, shortly after the preceeding parable. This is more clearly seen in the Greek text than in the Revised Standard Version's translation. Matthew 22:1 begins καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Ἰησοῦς πάλιν εἶπεν ("And answering, Jesus again said"), in apparent response to the action of the Pharisees in 21:45-46.

This parable is also an allegory. The king is God and his son is Jesus. Persistently God sends his servants to the Jews, especially to the leaders in this context, to request their presence at the wedding banquet (vv. 3-4). But they refuse to come; and, in violence which seems shocking in a parable about a wedding banquet, those who are invited treat the king's messengers with contempt and even kill them (v. 6; cf. 21:35, 39). In retaliation the king burns their city and destroys the "murderers" (v. 7).⁷³ Then the king orders the banquet hall filled with those who were not previously invited.⁷⁴

The parable emphasizes the totally unjust behavior of the religious leaders. Rather than accept God's gracious invitation to come into the Kingdom of Heaven, they choose to scorn his summons and abuse his messengers. Consequently the Kingdom is filled with people like tax collectors, prostitutes, and Gentiles, while the leaders of the Jewish people will be destroyed by the very God whom they claim to represent (cf. 8:11-12; 21:31-32, 43).

Although the descriptions of Jesus' opponents in the parables of 21:28-22:10 are broad enough to include all of the leaders in

⁷³The language of 22:7, "burned their city," quite possibly reflects the burning of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. E. Schweizer, op. cit., p. 418, believes 22:6-7 is an interpolation in which the events of A.D. 70 have "colored the language of the parable."

⁷⁴How Mt. 22:11-13 fits with 22:1-10 is a baffling question which has produced a large amount of speculation. Many commentators do not believe these verses were part of the original parable but were brought in by Matthew from a different context (e.g., R. V. G. Tasker, *The Gospel of St. Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), p. 207; D. Hill, op. cit., p. 302; E. Schweizer, op. cit., p. 416; A. H. McNeile, op. cit., p. 316; etc.). Due to the widespread agreement among commentators that vv. 11-13 refer to the church (cf. the commentaries just cited), no exposition of these verses is needed for this study of the Pharisees, for they are not in view here.

Jerusalem, the stories in 22:15ff. begin to focus on the specific concerns of the various religious groups. In each case those who question Jesus do not come sincerely seeking answers to problems. They bring carefully formulated questions designed to trap Jesus and discredit him. Jesus' brilliant replies to their questions emphasize his great understanding of the Law and the will of God, and his pure motives stand in stark contrast to the hypocritical scheming of his enemies. His answers evoke amazement from the Pharisees (22:22), astonishment from the crowds (22:33), and the retreat of his enemies (22:46).

Matthew reveals in 21:45 that the Pharisees clearly understood that Jesus was speaking against them; and later, after listening to the parable of the wedding banquet, they leave to formulate a plan to "entangle him in his talk" (22:15). Once they decide upon using the dilemma of taxation, they send to Jesus some of their disciples, along with some Herodians.⁷⁵ This differs from the parallel passage in Mk. 12:13-17, which pictures the group of Pharisees and Herodians as being sent by the Sanhedrin.⁷⁶ In Matthew's structuring of the narrative, Jesus' opponents change from "chief priests and elders" in 21:23 (an abbreviated reference to the Sanhedrin) to "chief priests and Pharisees" in 21:45, and in 22:15 it narrows to simply "Pharisees."

⁷⁵See pp. 58-59 above. Although Mt. 12:14 and 16:6 omit "Herodians" and "Herod" (cf. Mk. 3:6; 8:15), Mt. 22:15-22 retains the Herodians (cf. Mk. 12:13-17). For comments on the "disciples of the Pharisees" see pp. 43-44 above.

⁷⁶Note that the Sadducees make a separate attack on Jesus in 22:23-33. Since 21:45-46 shows the chief priests, who were most likely Sadducees, and the Pharisees acting in concert (cf. 16:1-12, where Pharisees and Sadducees are together), Matthew might have arranged his narrative to show that the Pharisees and chief priests of 21:45-46 left to form their own separate attacks on Jesus. The Pharisees' attack is seen in 22:15-22, and the chief priests' in 22:23-33. See A. Plummer, *op. cit.*, p. 304.

Following their unsuccessful attempt to trap Jesus in the dilemma of taxation, they leave him in amazement, stunned that he was able to emerge victorious.

On that "same day" (v. 23) the Sadducees approach Jesus with their insincere question concerning the resurrection. Skillfully handling their inquiry, Jesus shows from the Law that their disbelief in the resurrection is based on their ignorance of Scripture and the power of God (22:29ff.). When the Pharisees hear that Jesus adeptly handled the Sadducees, they make one final attempt to discredit him (22:34-40). Matthean redaction of this passage is extensive. The Markan portrait of a positive interchange between Jesus and a scribe (Mk. 12:28-34) is changed to an insidious plot by the Pharisees to trap Jesus.

According to Mark, a solitary scribe, after listening to Jesus answer the Sadducees, mentally approves of Jesus' reply and proceeds to ask him which commandment is most important of all. When he hears Jesus' answer, he affirms that he is correct; and Jesus, responding positively, tells the scribe he is not far from the Kingdom of God. All of this is changed in Matthew. Jesus is approached by a group of Pharisees who send forward one of their members to try and trap Jesus with a question concerning the greatest commandment of the Law. Unlike the scribe in Mark, the Pharisaic representative⁷⁷ in 22:35f. shows no

⁷⁷Many of the major manuscripts specify that the man who questioned Jesus was a lawyer (*νομικός*; *N, B, D, f¹³, etc.*). In Matthew and Luke this term is used to describe Jewish leaders "only in the contexts which deal with the administration or understanding of the Law," W. Gutbrod, "*νόμος*," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. IV, ed. G. Kittel, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), p. 1088. A *νομικός* in this context is a scribe trained in the Pharisaic tradition, D. Hill, op. cit., p. 306. However, there are weighty reasons for questioning the originality of this term in the

appreciation for the way Jesus handled the Sadducees' question. Although the Pharisees would have applauded belief in the resurrection, the Matthean context stresses the common goal of the Pharisees and Sadducees to trap Jesus, not their doctrinal differences. The Pharisee asks Jesus which is the greatest command of the Law because the Sadducees had failed in their attempt to discredit Jesus (22:34). It is noteworthy that the whole section in Mark depicting the scribal approval of Jesus and Jesus' favorable response to the scribe (Mk. 12:32-34) is deleted by Matthew. Affirmation is totally absent in the Matthean passage. The pericope ends with Jesus making a pronouncement on the Law. No response whatsoever by the Pharisee is recorded. No agreement is expressed. One is merely left with the impression that the attempt to entrap Jesus failed.

It is difficult to understand how Matthew conceived the Pharisaic question of 22:36 to be one which would "test" Jesus. In rabbinic literature Hillel is quoted as saying, "What you yourself hate, do not do to your neighbor: this is the whole Law, the rest is commentary. Go and learn it" (TB Shabbath 31a). Given this common understanding of the importance of love for God (cf. Shema⁶) and love for one's neighbor, why would Matthew understand the Pharisee's question as a matter of grave concern? G. Barth points out that the test would not involve the possibility that Jesus might slip and list love for neighbor before love for God, for Judaism had no qualms with summarizing the whole Law

Matthean text. B. M. Metzger, op. cit., p. 59, points out that it is absent "from family 1 as well as from widely scattered versional and patristic witnesses" and aside from Mt. 22:35 it nowhere else occurs in the Gospel. Therefore he believes that *λογικός* was introduced by copyists from a parallel passage in Lk. 10:25.

in the command to love one's neighbor.⁷⁸ Barth emphasizes that the issue is not with Jesus' words, "the second is like it" (v. 39), but with his comment that "on these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets" (v. 40). It is the concentration of the whole Law on one point that is at issue. According to Barth, the rabbis occasionally recognized summaries of the Law but did not give them fundamental importance.⁷⁹ "In principle each commandment is as important as the rest; in fact, for the Rabbinical understanding of the law there can be no question of raising one commandment above the others in importance."⁸⁰ Therefore, in 22:37-40, Jesus is going against the formal Pharisaic understanding of the Law, for he establishes the commandment of love as a norm by which the performance of all other commands are judged (cf. 7:12). He held that the very essence of the Law is found in the commandments to love God and neighbor. It is upon this crucial point that Matthew makes the contention of Jesus with the Pharisees turn.⁸¹

Barth's analysis is very attractive in light of the larger Matthean context. Previously Jesus has criticized the Pharisees for not understanding that God desires mercy (9:13; 12:7). While Jesus'

⁷⁸G. Barth, "Matthew's Understanding of the Law," in Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew, trans. P. Scott (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), p. 77.

⁷⁹Ibid. (TB Shab. 31a; Sifra, Lev. 19:18). D. Hil, op. cit., p. 306, makes this same point by referring to Mek. Exod. 6; Sifra, Dt. 12:28; 13:19; 19:11.

⁸⁰Ibid. Barth says that, although there was a tendency to distinguish between easy and difficult commands which led to distinctions between more and less important commands, "the invariable tendency was to equate them, cf. Aboth 2.1b: 'Behave towards an easy commandment (הַקֵּל הַקֵּל) exactly as towards a difficult one (הַקֶּשֶׁל הַקֶּשֶׁל).'" Cf. Jer. Kiddushin 1.61b; B. Hagigah 5a.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 78.

main concern is over the welfare of people, the Pharisees rigorously promote a rigid obedience to the Law based on ignorance of the purpose behind the Law. For Jesus the whole of the Law and the Prophets is summed up in the phrase, "Whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them" (7:12). As the authoritative teacher of the Law he knows the purpose behind the Law. Unlike the Pharisees, who make all commandments equal in importance, Jesus teaches that the two-fold law of love is the basis for all the Law.

Having answered the Pharisees' question on the Law, Jesus turns to ask his interrogators a question about the Messiah, in 22:41-46. By careful redaction Matthew causes Jesus' question to be addressed to a specific group of Pharisees, whereas in Mark the question is rhetorical and addressed to the general crowd of people in the temple (Mk. 12:35). The pericope begins with the genitive absolute *Συνηγμένων δὲ τῶν Φαρισαίων* ("Now while the Pharisees were gathered together"), and the repetition of the same term employed in 22:34 ("gathered together, *συνήχθησαν*") alerts the reader to the fact that Jesus is still addressing the same group of Pharisees. In Mark, Jesus' rhetorical question is followed by his own quotation of Ps. 110:1, "The Lord said to my Lord. . ." and finally a question on the interpretation of this verse, which was intended to cast doubt on the scribes' view of the Messiah (Mk. 12:36-37a). This monologue is transformed by Matthew into a dialogue between Jesus and the group of Pharisees. Jesus directs his question to them, asking "What do you think of the Christ? Whose son is he?" (v. 42), to which they respond, "The son of David" (v. 42). Their Davidic Messianism, seemingly shared by the general populace and applied by many to Jesus (9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 21:9, 15), is shown to be deficient by Jesus'

counter-question, "If David thus calls him Lord, how is he his son?" (v. 45). Unable to answer this question, the Pharisees are reduced to silence, providing yet another admission of their ignorance. Henceforth, they abandon their quest to berate Jesus publically (v. 46).⁸²

At this point Jesus is established as the victor in the debate with religious leaders. He understands Scripture, while they do not. He is qualified to expound correctly the will of God, while they are not. Although they share his belief in the inspiration of Scripture (22:43), they cannot match his grasp of its meaning. The Pharisees are totally defeated by Jesus and forced to abandon their previous form of attack. Matthew's concluding remark that they did not "dare to ask him any more questions" (v. 46) serves as the final public admission of ignorance by these religious leaders.

After the failure of the Pharisees to discredit him, Jesus turns to the crowd which had witnessed the previous debate and delivers the most lengthy polemic against the Pharisees in the entire New Testament (23:1-36).⁸³ In detail he describes their hypocrisy and prophetically announces their coming judgment by God. Located at the end of the series of conflict stories in narrative number five, this first part of the fifth discourse serves as powerful climax to Jesus' confrontation with his enemies. Documenting many specific evil traits of the Pharisees, this discourse not only summarizes Pharisaic wickedness, but it also

⁸²Mt. 22:46 is an expansion of Mk. 12:34, moved by Matthew to the end of this story instead of the earlier story as in Mark.

⁸³Much of the content of Mt. 23 is also found in Luke, but it is scattered over a broader portion of the narrative (cf. Lk. 11:39-52; 13:34f.; 14:11; 18:14). Matthew has gathered together in one location a number of units of tradition and formed a sustained condemnation of the Pharisees. Mt. 23:1-3, 5, 7b-10, 15-22, 24, 28, 32, 33 have no parallels in Luke. See A. Plummer, op. cit., p. 313.

leaves this wickedness vividly in the mind of the reader as a preparation for the Passion Narrative and the prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem in Mt. 23:37ff. Jesus' goodness stands in sharpest contrast to the evil of the religious leaders who plot his murder. His death will be totally undeserved, an astounding atrocity perpetrated by the Jewish leaders. However, the destruction of Jerusalem and the death of many Jews will be the completely deserved result of Jewish rejection of God's Son, the Messiah.

In the fifth discourse, Jesus first speaks to the issue of the position of religious leadership occupied by the scribes and Pharisees, making a remarkable statement, if it is interpreted literally: "The scribes and Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; so practice and observe whatever they tell you, but not what they do; for they preach, but do not practice" (23:2-3). Teachers in antiquity usually sat while teaching, a custom that Jesus himself observes in Matthew (5:1; 13:1f.; 15:29; 24:3; 26:55). The man who taught the Law in a synagogue, preferably a scribe, would sit in front of the congregation, but it is difficult to know if the chair on which he sat was actually called "Moses' seat." No further mention of this term is made until the fourth century A.D., where, in Pesikta 7a, reference is made to the seat reserved for the president of the Sanhedrin.⁸⁴ Consequently, making a decision on whether "Moses' seat" in v. 2 is a technical term for the chair from which the Law was taught⁸⁵ or a symbolic expression for the teaching of the Law of

⁸⁴A. H. McNeile, op. cit., p. 329.

⁸⁵See W. Schrage, "συνάγωγη," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. VII, ed. G. Friedrich, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), pp. 819-20.

Moses,⁸⁶ involves a somewhat subjective judgment. However, it is well-known that the scribes believed their oral tradition to be as authoritative as Scripture, claiming that it had been passed down in an unbroken succession from the time of Moses.⁸⁷ Regardless of whether "Moses' seat" is to be understood technically or symbolically, it is clear that the term refers ultimately to the exposition of the Mosaic Law, an area in which Jesus has previously illustrated the incompetence of the Pharisees. One might therefore be justifiably suspicious that Jesus' remark in 23:2-3 is tinged with irony, much like his use of irony in 23:32.⁸⁸

Interestingly, Jesus does not say that people should obey what the scribes and Pharisees "teach" (διδάσκω), but what they "say" (λέγω). If this avoidance of the word διδάσκω is deliberate, there is a striking contrast to 5:1, where Jesus sits on the mountain to "teach" (ἐδίδασκεν; cf. 26:55). The indication might be that the words of the scribes, unlike the authoritative teaching of Jesus, are not suitable to be called "teaching." Through their pseudo-teaching, they simply burden people with the weight of their commands (23:4). However, the word choice might mean that the scribes merely repeat what they have been taught but Jesus genuinely expounds the Law.

⁸⁶See R. T. France, "κἄθηματι," in The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, vol. III, op. cit., pp. 588-89.

⁸⁷Ibid. (Aboth i. 1 on the traditio legis, and Rosh ha-shanah 25a).

⁸⁸Another non-literal way of interpreting 23:3 is to view it as an overstatement similar to 4:24, which emphasizes Jesus' popularity by saying ". . .they brought him all the sick. . . ." If this is the case, Jesus is merely saying that usually the Pharisees teach the truth and for the most part should be obeyed. However, such an interpretation seems to contradict the Matthean emphasis on the Pharisees' ignorance of Scripture.

Further evidence for hypocrisy is presented with regard to the personal habits of the Pharisees. Their religious observances are not motivated by the law of love, which is stated in 22:37-40, but by the desire to impress people with their outward appearance (v. 5). For evidence Jesus refers to the Pharisaic habit of exaggerating the visibility of their phylacteries by increasing the width of the leather strap with which these symbolic boxes were attached to the forehead or left arm (v. 5)⁸⁹ He also calls attention to their practice of extending the length of the fringes Jews were required to wear on the corners of their outer garments (v. 5; Nu. 15:38f.; Dt. 22:12).⁹⁰ Seemingly this was an attempt to call attention to their superior piety, but Jesus labels such outward representations as evidence of pride, not piety.

Continuing to expose Pharisaic arrogance, Jesus calls attention to their behavior at social events. He charges that "they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues" (v. 6). The seats of honor in the synagogues were located on a "platform facing the congregation, with their backs to the chest in which the roles of Scripture were kept."⁹¹ This desire for recognition also expressed itself in a love to receive special recognition in the marketplaces by being called

⁸⁹Phylacteries were "small cases made of parchment or leather containing a piece of vellum on which were inscribed texts of the Law Dt. 11. 13-22; 6.4-9; Exod. 13. 11-16; 13. 2-10). They were tied to the forehead and left arm in fulfillment of Exod. 13.9, 16; Dt. 6. 8; 11. 18," D. Hill, op. cit., p. 310.

⁹⁰Jesus himself wore these fringes (cf. Mt. 9:20; 14:36).

⁹¹A. H. McNeile, op. cit., p. 331 (Jos. Ant. XV. ii. 4; Tos. Megill. iv. 21).

"rabbi," a term of respect used by disciples for their teachers, and the official title for scribes (v. 7).⁹²

After Jesus' remarks on Pharisaic hypocrisy in vv. 3-7, a short passage follows in which Jesus' words appear to be directed exclusively to his disciples (vv. 8-12). This passage is devoted to teaching the disciples how their behavior should be opposite to that of the Pharisees and stresses sacrificial service. Since the material seems applicable to the Christian community and not to the crowd as a whole, it appears that Matthew placed this passage in its present location in order to juxtapose the unacceptable behavior of the Pharisees with the sacrificial behavior Jesus intends for his disciples.

Next, Jesus pronounces a series of seven woes upon the scribes and Pharisees (23:13-32). In the Matthean context these woes appear to be directed to the scribes and Pharisees standing close by, probably the same group which gathered around Jesus in 22:41. The dominant term used in these seven woes is "hypocrites." Thus 23:13-32 expands the initial evaluation of 23:3-7, that there is a great discrepancy between the outward religious appearance of the Pharisees and their inner disposition and alienation from God. Pointing out faults in their teaching, lifestyle, and character, Jesus concludes the section of woes by proclaiming the future judgment of the Pharisees, in 23:33-36.

In the first woe Jesus asserts that the Pharisees not only have no participation in the Kingdom of Heaven but that through their influence they prevent others from submitting to God's rule (23:13; cf. 21:31-32). Violently opposed to Jesus, whose presence brings the Kingdom

⁹²D. Hill, op. cit., p. 311.

among men (12:28), the Pharisees actively seek to turn people against Jesus by discrediting him unjustly (e.g., 9:34; 12:24).

The second woe develops further the picture of Pharisaic alienation from the Kingdom of Heaven (v. 15). Jesus points out their zeal in seeking out Gentiles who will become full proselytes by undergoing circumcision⁹³ and ironically concludes that they only succeed in making the proselyte "twice as much a child of hell" as they are themselves.⁹⁴ The great effort expended in making a single convert amply testifies to the zeal of the Pharisees. But the statement that they make a proselyte "twice as much a child of hell" indicates that their zeal is misdirected.

In the third woe Jesus stresses the blindness of the Pharisees, not their hypocrisy (vv. 16-22). He says that their confidence in being guides for the people is without basis, for they are themselves blind (cf. 15:14).⁹⁵ Jesus reveals their blindness by pointing out their ignorance of the "common hermeneutical rule: 'If the lesser, then the greater,'"⁹⁶ in their understanding of the nature of oath-taking. Ignorantly they rule that lesser objects like the gold in the temple or a gift on the altar are of more value in oath-taking than greater objects

⁹³A full proselyte submitted to circumcision and obedience to the Law (Jos. Ant. XVIII. iii. 5), unlike "worshippers of God" (Acts 13:50; 16:14; Ant. XIV. vii. 2) or "God-fearers" (Acts 10:2, 22; 13:16, 26) who did not completely embrace Judaism.

⁹⁴Jos. Ant XX. ii. 4, points out the difference between Hellenistic and Pharisaic Judaism and portrays the great effort Pharisaic Jews expended to convert those who had already come under the influence of Hellenistic Judaism. It would seem likely, therefore, that in 23:15 Jesus is referring to the conversion of people to Pharisaic Judaism.

⁹⁵See p. 87 above for details on the concept of "blind guides."

⁹⁶D. Hill, op. cit., p. 312.

like the temple in which the gold is located or the altar which makes a gift sacred (vv. 16-19). Earlier in Matthew, Jesus taught that a man's integrity should be such that there is no need for him to swear an oath to guarantee the truthfulness of his word (5:33-37). By contrast, the Pharisees in 23:16, 18 are said to provide criteria for judging the binding nature of an oath. Such criteria open the way for premeditated dishonesty by the careful selection of the object upon which one swears. Jesus asserts that the Pharisees' dictums are based on ignorant misunderstandings of the importance of various objects used in the swearing of oaths and are completely invalid (vv. 17, 19-22). Aside from the perversity of even having rules on the binding nature of oaths, the Pharisees were confused on the value of objects upon which oaths were sworn. Consequently their rulings on such matters were not to be trusted.

The fourth woe focuses on the Pharisees' tendency to be so consumed with fulfilling proscribed religious observances that they lost sight of the truly important matters of living for God. Jesus uses as his example the practice of tithing (v. 23). Deuteronomy 14:22 commands, "You shall tithe all the yield of your seed, which comes forth from the field year by year" (cf. Lev. 27:30). It seems that the Pharisees were concerned enough over the fulfillment of this law that they tithed even the herbs and spices they used for cooking. Yet such concern for obedience on a minute level was not reflected in the more important aspects of religious life.⁹⁷ In a powerful contrast, Jesus juxtaposes the Pharisees' tithing of mint, dill, and cummin, with their lack of justice, mercy, and faith. Their lack of justice is most clearly seen

⁹⁷See p.103 above, on Mt. 22:34-40 for the contrast between Jesus' and the Pharisees' views on the weightier matters of the Law.

in their desire to murder Jesus, even though he is innocent of any wrongdoing. On two previous occasions, Jesus has commented on their ignorance of mercy (9:13; 12:7), and their continual resistance to Jesus and the Kingdom of Heaven evidences their lack of faith. Therefore the great effort the Pharisees expend at obeying certain commands of the Law does not bear witness to their godliness but only serves as a contrast to their lack of concern for the weightier matters of the Law, things for which God is most concerned.

Concentration on the smaller matters of the Law caused such myopia in the Pharisees that they were blinded to weightier issues. In 23:24 Jesus repeats his previous accusation that they are "blind guides" and illustrates their behavior by employing the very humorous example of a man straining a tiny gnat out of his drink, only to swallow a great wooly camel instead. This symbolic way of restating his argument of v. 23 could be an allusion to a current practice among some Pharisees of straining their drinking water in order to avoid the possibility of swallowing an unclean insect.⁹⁸ However, the statement more probably reflects a humorous word play between the Aramaic words for gnat (ܢܕܣܦ) and camel (ܥܡܠ).⁹⁹ Whatever the secondary meaning might entail, the primary thrust of Jesus' statement is clear: the Pharisees are incompetent to fulfill their assumed role as guides for the people.

The fifth woe continues Jesus' accusation of blindness and hypocrisy. On the one hand the Pharisees show extreme concern over the

⁹⁸E. Schweizer, op. cit., p. 441.

⁹⁹A. H. McNeile, op. cit., p. 336.

ceremonial cleanness of their eating utensils;¹⁰⁰ but, on the other hand, they put food into these utensils which has been obtained through greedy and self-indulgent motivation (23:25). As in the fourth woe, their intense concern for details of small importance blinded them to the truly significant matters of life. Using "cup" and "plate" as metaphors for the Pharisees, Jesus states that first they need to be clean on the inside and then they will also be clean on the outside (v. 26). In other words, if they were concerned about justice, mercy, and faith, and sought from a pure heart to do the will of God, their external observances would be meaningful. As it is, they are only hollow expressions of hypocrisy and blindness.¹⁰¹

Using stronger and more vivid imagery in the sixth woe, Jesus completes his accusation that the Pharisees appear to be fine externally but their inward condition is wretchedly different. This time he compares them to whitewashed tombs which, although made to appear beautiful outwardly, contain the defiling bones of dead men (23:27-28). It is unlikely that Jesus is referring to the practice of whitening graves before the Passover to prevent pilgrims, coming to Jerusalem for the feast, from accidentally defiling themselves by walking over unmarked graves (cf. Lk. 11:44).¹⁰² Jesus is speaking about the beautiful outward

¹⁰⁰For details on the purification of eating utensils see p. 48.

¹⁰¹The singular "Blind Pharisee" in 23:26 is most likely a rhetorical device used for dramatic effect, F. V. Filson, *op. cit.*, p. 247.

¹⁰²Num. 19:16 states, "Whoever in the open field touches one who is slain with a sword, or a dead body, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days." In order to prevent pilgrims coming to Jerusalem for the Passover from accidentally defiling themselves and thus becoming unable to enter the temple, it became a custom to whiten the graves around Jerusalem on the 15th of Adar. See A. H. McNeile, *op. cit.*, p. 337 (M. Shek. i. 1; Moed Kat. 1a, 5a).

appearance of certain ornate tombs, not the need to make otherwise inconspicuous graves visible. The contrast is between outward appearance and inward reality. Thus Jesus is referring to something like the Pharisaic practice of beautifying the tombs of the prophets, mentioned in the next woe (23:29). The external religious appearance of the Pharisees is deceptive, concealing the hypocrisy and iniquity¹⁰³ which lurked behind the outward facade. Although they were presently standing in the temple, confident in their ceremonial cleanness, the defiled nature of their inward condition rendered them unfit to be in the presence of God.

The seventh and final woe reveals yet another discrepancy between the Pharisees' confession and their behavior (23:29-31). On the one hand, they lament the terrible way their forefathers treated the prophets and as an expression of their reverence for the prophets build large and beautiful tombs in their honor.¹⁰⁴ Yet, at the very time Jesus is speaking, the Pharisees are involved in a plot to kill him, the Messiah, the Son of God, whom the people call a prophet (21:11; 22:46); and, previously they rejected John the Baptist, the greatest of the prophets, who announced the coming of the Messiah (11:9ff.; 14:5; 21:25-26, 32). Consequently, they are involved in a sin worse than that of their ancestors whose behavior they condemned. Far from being more righteous than their forefathers, the Pharisees are actually more wicked. Ironically, their condemnation of their ancestors' murderous actions serves as a testimony

¹⁰³Greek *ἀνομία* ("lawlessness"). For men who claimed to teach the Law, this would be a strong term of denunciation.

¹⁰⁴Other evidence for the construction of such tombs is seen in Acts 2:29; Jos. *Ant.* XVI. vii. 1; *War* IV. ix. 7. See A. H. McNeile, *op. cit.*, p. 338.

against their own actions (v. 31). They have pronounced judgment upon themselves.¹⁰⁵

Having condemned the scribes and Pharisees for many things, Jesus now turns to predict the future and pronounce final judgment upon them (23:32-36). He begins with a statement of biting irony, ordering the Pharisees to complete the evil deeds of their forefathers (v. 32). Then he repeats the derogatory description first used by John in 3:7 and calls them a brood of vipers and insists that they will not avoid being sentenced to hell (v. 33). Jesus declares that he will send "prophets and wise men and scribes" to the Pharisees, some of whom they will kill and crucify and others whom they will scourge (v. 34), implying that their opposition to Jesus will continue after his death, in the persecution of his followers. Their sin is, therefore, far worse than that of their ancestors who killed the prophets, for the Pharisees will kill the Messiah, as well as his special messengers. They are as one with all recalcitrant Jews down through history who have killed God's messengers, and the blood guilt for the murder of every righteous man from the time of Abel will come upon them (23:35f.).¹⁰⁶

With this terrible pronouncement of doom, Jesus concludes his remarks to the Pharisees. Nevertheless, his next statement reveals an attitude of love and mercy toward these murderous enemies (23:37-39). In tender words he expresses his desire that those who have killed God's messengers would repent and come under his sheltering love and

¹⁰⁵Note that in 12:27 Jesus says the "sons of the Pharisees" will judge them because of their unjust judgment of Jesus.

¹⁰⁶The identity of Zecharia, son of Barachiah in 23:35 is an issue of debate. For an extended discussion see A. H. McNeil, op. cit., p. 340.

protection. Yet they obstinately refuse to respond to his love, leaving him no recourse but to return in judgment.

Matthew records no reference to the Pharisees in the eschatological discourse of Chapters 24-25, which completes the fifth discourse section. In the sixth narrative they are not mentioned until after the death and burial of Jesus; when, on the day after Preparation Day (i.e., the Sabbath), they accompany the chief priests (cf. 21:45) on a mission to Pilate (27:62-66). Calling Jesus an "impostor," they report to Pilate Jesus' declaration that he would rise from the dead after three days (v. 63).¹⁰⁷ The chief priests and Pharisees ask Pilate to secure the tomb and post a guard in order to prevent Jesus' disciples from stealing the body and claiming that he actually rose from the dead. Complying with their request, Pilate has the tomb sealed and guarded, but to no avail. As he predicted, Jesus rises from the dead. The only deception, ironically, turns out to be on the part of the chief priests and elders, who, in 28:11-15, bribe the soldiers who had guarded the tomb into lying about the resurrection and saying that Jesus' disciples stole his body during the night. Supposedly setting out to prevent deception in 27:62ff., the religious leaders become perpetrators of a great hoax themselves. These men are so opposed to the will of God that even the fact of Jesus' resurrection from the dead does not cause them to repent and believe.

Conclusions

One of the primary Christological themes in Matthew's presentation of the good news concerning Jesus the Messiah is that he is the

¹⁰⁷It is unclear how the Pharisees knew of Jesus' prediction that he would rise from the dead. Possibly the statement of being three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (12:40) provides the basis for this understanding.

authoritative interpreter and teacher of the Law. Written in a Jewish setting, this Gospel reveals a pronounced interest in the relationship of Jesus to the Law. A major way in which Matthew presents Jesus' messianic interpretation of the Law is by juxtaposing Jesus' teaching with that of the established Jewish religious leaders. Much of Jesus' teaching on the Law involves the dispelling of false notions propagated by religious leaders and the replacing of them with correct knowledge of the will of God (e.g., 5:21-48). Because the Pharisees are one of the dominant groups in Matthew responsible for incorrect teaching of the Law, they represent one of the major factions with whom Jesus has to deal. Consequently, a large amount of space is devoted to an analysis of their credentials as teachers.

The first reference to the Pharisees is by John the Baptist, who calls them a "brood of vipers" and warns of their coming judgment (3:7ff.). This initial portrait remains constant throughout the Gospel, for the Pharisees never repent of their evil. They oppose Jesus during his entire ministry and are among those who bring about his death (21:33-46). Failing to repent, even after Jesus rises from the dead, they continue to persecute Jesus' disciples even as they persecuted him (cf. 23:34). Matthew portrays the Pharisees as evil in disposition (e.g., 12:33-37; 23:25-28) and cites their implacable opposition to Jesus as evidence of how completely hardened they are against the will of God. Having no part in the Kingdom of Heaven (e.g., 5:20; 21:31-32, 43; 15:13; 23:13-15), they can expect only the inexorable wrath of God (21:33-41; 22:1-10; 23:33-36).

Nevertheless, the Pharisees' outward appearance conceals their inner depravity. They appear to be very religious, due to their

meticulous observance of the commands of the Law, even to the point of tithing their table spices (23:23). Also, their confrontations with Jesus typically center on an accusation that he or his disciples do not obey the Law. But behind this outward facade of piety lurks hypocrisy as well as blind ignorance. In the conflict stories between Jesus and the Pharisees, Matthew shows clearly that Jesus is innocent of their charges and that their condemnations of Jesus stem from ignorance of the Law (e.g., 12:7). Matthew repeatedly contrasts Jesus' superior understanding of the Law with the Pharisees' ignorance of it and shows that Jesus' actions are merciful and pure, while the Pharisees' greedy and self-centered actions are loathsome. All of their meticulous religious rituals are inspired by their desire to be exalted by the praise of men, not by a desire to obey God (23:5-7).

The Matthean portrait of the Pharisees seems to fulfill at least three concrete literary functions. First, the Pharisees function as one of the primary representatives of Jewish religious leadership opposed to Jesus. In the presentation of Jesus as the messianic Son of God, the evil nature and behavior of the Pharisees serves by way of contrast to illuminate the goodness of Jesus. Answering the question why the religious leaders rejected Jesus, Matthew shows that it was due to their own arrogance and pride, not to any deficiency on the part of Jesus. Second, the contrast between the Pharisees' ignorance of Scripture and Jesus' keen understanding of the Law serves to validate his messianic interpretation of Torah. Third, the form of Pharisaic piety serves as a model of what Christians are to avoid. This is seen most clearly in 23:5-12, where Jesus directly contrasts the behavior his disciples are to exhibit with the unacceptable behavior of the Pharisees.

Disciples of Jesus are to be pure inwardly and through love fulfill the will of God. They are not to focus on minor issues of the Law so as to obstruct their concentration on the issues with which God is truly concerned, namely, those of love, mercy, justice, and faithfulness (cf. 7:12; 22:37-40; 23:23). Jesus' followers must both reject the religion of the Pharisees (15:14) and embrace the teaching of Jesus, the authoritative interpreter of the Law.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

Studying the literary position of the Pharisees in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew has revealed unity in diversity. Although the Gospels reflect vast differences in structure and purpose and show divergent concerns in their use of the Pharisees within their literary frameworks, the actual pictures of the Pharisees are strikingly similar.

Both Mark and Matthew present a one-sided, polemical view of the Pharisees. Neither author shows the slightest concern for revealing positive as well as negative aspects of those who belonged to this Jewish party. Their major concern is to present the good news of Jesus Christ, not to give a well-rounded view of those with whom he came into conflict. Except for Mt. 3:7ff., where John the Baptist condemns the Pharisees, calling them a "brood of vipers," and a neutral reference to the Pharisaic practice of fasting (Mk. 2:18; Mt. 9:14), the Pharisees only appear in Mark and Matthew in situations of conflict with Jesus. The reasons for the conflict, however, differ according to the purposes of the two authors.

In Mark, the conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees focuses on Jesus' rejection of their oral tradition. Indignant, because Jesus refuses to submit to their tradition, the Pharisees' anger quickly accelerates to the point of planning his death (3:6). Through his dramatic presentation of narrative details, Mark reveals how Pharisaic adherence to oral tradition causes a lack of compassion for the needs of

the common people and how Jesus' desire to minister to those in need causes him to reject Pharisaic rules (e.g., 3:1-6). Furthermore, through oral tradition the Pharisees cause disobedience to clear commands of God (7:8-13). Consequently, the Pharisees' hatred of Jesus has no basis in wrongdoing on his part but is based on his rejection of the lifestyle to which they closely adhere. Intense concentration on fine points of tradition, interpreted by the Pharisees to be a sign of true religion, causes them to be unfeeling and hardened to the pathos of human need. Evil in spite of, or perhaps because of, their externally oriented religion, they seek to destroy the one who challenges the basis of their lifestyle, and their opposition to Jesus provides one of the major sources of narrative movement toward the Passion.

The conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees in Matthew centers not on his rejection of their oral tradition but on their poor exegesis of Scripture. Jesus is the authoritative interpreter of the Law, and the Pharisees are among his rivals who offer alternative expositions of Scripture. Matthew composes his material to show that Jesus truly understands the will of God, correctly interpreting and teaching the Law, and consistently living according to its precepts. Repeatedly Matthew reveals the depth of Jesus' understanding and the quality of his lifestyle by contrasting them with the Pharisees' ignorance of the Law and their hypocritical behavior. As rival teachers who charge that Jesus is not being obedient to the Torah, the Pharisees are exposed as evil men, alienated from God and destined for judgment (12:33-37; 15:13-14). Their portrait serves to show by way of contrast that Jesus' messianic interpretation of the Law represents the will of God; in comparison with Jesus, the Pharisees' understanding of and obedience to the

Law are completely impoverished. Jesus knows that love is the foundation of the Law and seeks to help people learn to live lifestyles of compassionate love (7:12; 22:37-40). The Pharisees, however, show by their burdensome interpretations of the Law (cf. 11:28ff.), their cavalier attitude toward people (e.g., 12:1-14), and their evil plan to murder God's righteous Messiah (21:33-46) that they are blind to the meaning of God's love and mercy.

Pharisaic evil is not immediately revealed in Mark but is dramatically portrayed in the space of three conflict stories (2:13-3:6). Matthew, however, introduces the Pharisees as a brood of vipers (3:7), and consistently develops this picture of them through the rest of the Gospel. In Mark their opposition develops quickly, but in Matthew it is a given assumption from the beginning that they are evil. Matthew also presents a more complete portrait of Pharisaic evil. Not only does Matthew have large sections of material devoted to criticism of the Pharisees (e.g., Chapter 23), but there is also a tendency in Matthew to add anti-Pharisaic material to Markan conflict stories (e.g., 12:33-37; 15:12-14). Although Matthew's description of the Pharisees is much more detailed, it is not contradictory to Mark's, however, for both Gospels focus on the hypocritical aspect of Pharisaism. In Mark their commitment to details of oral tradition keeps them from being concerned for the needs of other people and from recognizing the goodness of Jesus' behavior. They show intense concern for ritual cleanness, Sabbath rest, and other points of legal demands, but little compassion for those in need (3:1-6; 7:1ff.). Similarly, in Matthew, their concentration on fulfilling certain commands of the Law to the most minute degree blinds them from seeing the purpose of Jesus' actions. Their religious zeal stands in stark contrast to

their evil disposition. Consequently, the consistent picture of the Pharisees in Matthew and in Mark is one of men whose devotion to religious actions, like tithing and ceremonial purity, blinded them to the more important issues of love and compassion.

On four occasions Matthew changes Markan references to scribes into references to Pharisees. The first instance of this is in 9:11, where Mark's "scribes of the Pharisees" (Mk. 2:16) is reduced to "Pharisees." Possibly Matthew made this change in order to connect this story to 12:1-8. In both pericopes Jesus quotes Hos. 6:6; and, since 12:1-8 is a controversy strictly between Jesus and the Pharisees in the Markan parallel (Mk. 2:23-28), a modification made to unite the two stories is not surprising. The second instance of altering "scribe" to "Pharisee" occurs in 12:24 (cf. Mk. 3:22). Matthew's redaction of his Markan source reveals a conscious effort to unite the conflict stories in Chapter 12 into a sequential, cause and effect relationship.¹ Since the stories before and after 12:22-37 involve Pharisees, it seems reasonable to say that Matthew changed "scribe" to "Pharisee" in order to produce the continuity he desired between these controversy stories. A similar motive also appears to explain the third and fourth times Matthew exchanges these names. Chapter 22 is the continuation of a conflict series which begins in Chapter 21; and, as in Chapter 12, Matthew carefully unites these controversy stories into a sequential arrangement.² Since the Pharisees are the ones with whom Jesus was in conflict at the end of Chapter 21 and the beginning of Chapter 22,

¹For details see pp. 76-84 above.

²For details see pp. 93-105 above.

Matthew changed "scribe" to "Pharisee" in order to make 22:34-46 continuous with the preceeding material. It does not, therefore, appear that Matthew exchanged these names in an effort to further defame the name "Pharisee." If that were true, it is hard to understand why the lengthy criticism in Chapter 23 is directed against both scribes and Pharisees (cf. 5:20; 12:38-45; 15:1-20).

Unlike the Pharisees in Mark, those in Matthew are a dominant force in Jerusalem. For example, in Mk. 12:13-17 the Pharisees are sent by the Sanhedrin to trap Jesus in the dilemma of taxation, but in Mt. 22:15-22 they conduct their own planning on how to trap him. Furthermore, in Matthew the Pharisees work together with the prestigious chief priests (27:62-67; cf. 21:45-46) and are involved in the events of the Passion (21:33-46), while in Mark there is no recorded involvement of the Pharisees in the Passion events. Finally, in Mt. 15:1, both the scribes and the Pharisees who come to question Jesus on his view of ritual purity are from Jerusalem, not just the scribes, as in Mk. 7:1. Thus it appears that Matthew affords a more prominent place for the Pharisees in Jerusalem than does Mark, accrediting them with a greater amount of authority and initiative.

In conclusion, the different roles played by the Pharisees in the literary structures of Mark and Matthew reflect the major themes developed in these Gospels. The material on the Pharisees is selectively chosen, purposefully arranged, and carefully redacted to reflect the Markan and Matthean purposes. However, the portraits of the Pharisees given by the two authors are very similar and do not appear to be contradictory. A more fully developed picture of the Pharisees will be possible when literary studies similar to the one conducted in this

thesis are completed on Luke-Acts and John. When the authorial intentions of these documents are analyzed to see what roll the Pharisees play within their narrative structures and the results are compared with those produced by this thesis, the historical understanding of this important first-century Jewish group will be on a more solid foundation.

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